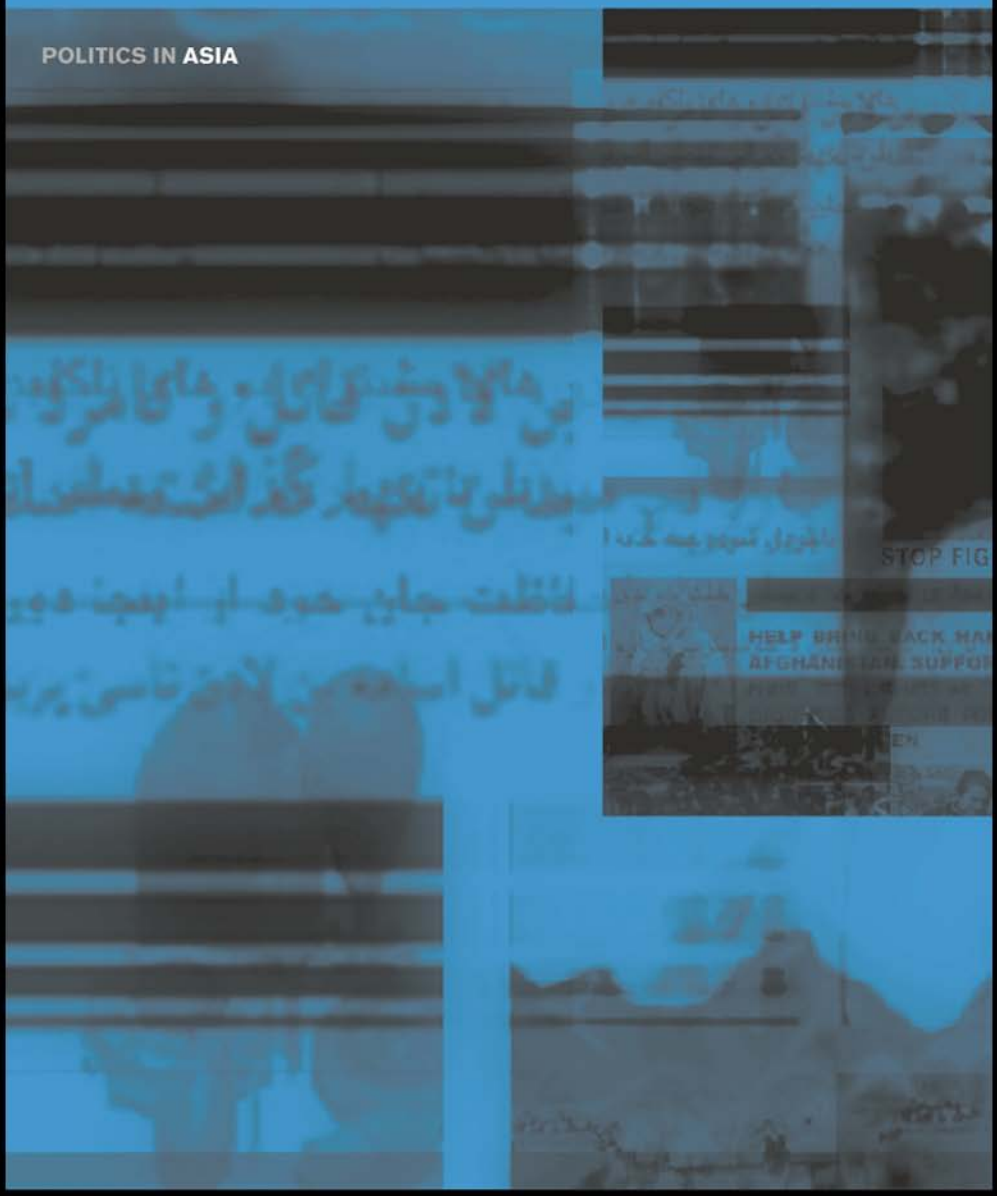
Media, War, and Terrorism

Responses from the Middle East and Asia

Edited by Peter van der Veer and Shoma Munshi

POLITICS IN ASIA



Media, War, and Terrorism

Media, War, and Terrorism analyses responses to the events of 9/11, its aftermath and repercussions from the point of view of Asian and Middle Eastern countries. Perhaps controversially, the contributors argue that while the United States, and to an extent European, media seem largely unified in their coverage and silence in public debate of the events surrounding the attacks on the World Trade Center, there exists open, critical debate in other parts of the world.

By examining the use of media as an instrument of warfare and analysing the construction of public opinion in mediated electronic warfare, this book clearly shows the difference in perspectives between public opinion in the United States and the rest of the world. Moving away from popular assumptions that societies in the West are democratic and progressive and those in the Middle East and Asia are either authoritarian or underdeveloped, this examination of the media in those countries suggests the exact opposite. In combining an examination of the general, theoretical issues concerning the use of the media as an instrument of warfare with rich, geographically diverse case studies, the editors are able to provide a diverse and intriguing analysis of the impact and interconnectedness of national and global medias.

Bringing together contributions from academics, journalists, and media practitioners from all over the world, *Media, War, and Terrorism* is essential reading for all of those seeking an informed, non-Western perspective on the events following 9/11.

Peter van der Veer is Professor of Comparative Religion and Director of the Research Centre of Religion and Society at the University of Amsterdam. **Shoma Munshi** is Assistant Director at the Center for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania.

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The editors wish to thank all those who participated in the Delhi conference of March 11–12, 2002. In addition to the contributors, there were a number of persons who contributed greatly to the success of this conference, particularly when it was being tied up across continents! At the ASSR, we wish to thank Jose Komen who worked so efficiently at looking after all the financial and organizational aspects of the conference. She was a tower of strength and always helpful. In New Delhi, we wish to express our gratitude to Wing Commander and Mrs. A. C. Munshi and Poroma Rebello who took care of all the arrangements, at both the India International Centre and the India Habitat Centre, from booking the conference room and dealing with accommodation, transportation and many other last-minute details. Their warmth and hospitality is something we treasure. We would also like to thank Dr. S. Y. Quraishi, Director General, *Doordarshan*, who arranged for an immediate televised interview with Peter van der Veer, Dale F. Eickelman and Manoj Joshi. We are grateful to the India International Centre for the use of its conference facilities.

To bring out a volume that is truly global in its production with authors living in Indonesia, India, the United States and the UK, Europe, Iran, Malaysia – and one of them (Dale Eickelman) close to the bomb blast in Morocco during the

writing up of his contribution – is a feat in itself. Since this is a reflection on current events it was also imperative to update the book constantly because its subject evolved so rapidly. In responding to this challenge we were greatly helped by the comments of the readers for the press. Finally, we would like to record our appreciation of the efforts of Stephanie Rogers and Zoe Botterill of RoutledgeCurzon in bringing out this volume expeditiously.

Peter van der Veer

Shoma Munshi

Amsterdam/Philadelphia

June 1, 2003

1 Introduction

Peter van der Veer

An assault on the financial and military headquarters in the metropolis of an empire is unprecedented in modern history. The horror of the massacre and the scale of the destruction as well as its aftermath in warfare in Afghanistan and Iraq have made 9/11 a moment of world-historical significance. Empires have always been built by war and expansion and therefore have encountered armed resistance and military setbacks, but Paris, London or Amsterdam were never under direct attack from militants, coming from Africa, India or Indonesia. In that sense the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and on the Pentagon in Washington highlight a rupture in the history of empires. Earlier European empires, such as those of the French, British, and Dutch, were outcomes of a form of globalization in which empire and nation-state were produced within the same historical frame. There was a direct linkage between imperial culture and the national cultures of both the colonizer and colonized (van der Veer 2001). The struggle for national independence by the colonized often did not so much challenge the universality of enlightenment values, but rather challenged their imperial application in the domination of peoples of other race and civilization. In the contemporary form of globalization, a period of decolonization, in which independent nation-states have filled the United Nations and the map of the world, has been succeeded by the collapse of the post-World War II division between the First (capitalist), Second (communist), and Third (developing) World. The current era is characterized by simultaneous talk about a New World Order (or Pax Americana) and about a Clash of Civilizations. While the first is a continuation of the notion of the universality of the Western Enlightenment and the need for a global police to keep global peace, the second is a continuation of the romantic notion of essential differences between civilizations and the need to keep these civilizations peacefully in their separate geographical places. The responses to the assault on the United States on September 11 have held elements of both notions. This is the contradictory result of the contemporary form of globalization, in which, on the one hand, there is a growing connection between people of very different historical backgrounds and traditions within a framework of huge power inequalities; and, on the other, a growing disquiet and desire to keep things separate.

The horrendous attack on New York and Washington has raised, first and

foremost, the question of who the attackers were. It is striking how little the American public (but also the global public) was informed about the existence of a variety of terrorist groups, let alone their global nature, their ideology, their resources. While this may sound primarily like an issue for intelligence services, it is also a larger question in public debate. This is not unimportant, since the Oklahoma bombing, perpetrated by Timothy McVeigh, a psychologically troubled veteran of the first Gulf War, showed how easily everyone assumed that it must be 'foreign' Muslim terrorists who attacked the United States, and how surprisingly little the public was informed about American patriotic supremacists. Similarly, the anthrax scare that hit the United States after 9/11 has probably no connection at all with foreign terrorism. Nevertheless, there is now ample evidence that the 9/11 assault was carried out by the terrorist ring of Osama bin Laden, a Saudi multi-millionaire living in Afghanistan, although it has not been demonstrated, at least not in public. If one remembers the Lockerbie tragedy and its judicial aftermath, it should be clear that it is not easy to gather evidence about acts of terrorism. But if we assume that enough evidence is gathered that bin Laden is behind 9/11, then he should be brought to justice (which has still not happened two years after the fact) and not, as the US president has officially stated, just be 'wanted: dead or alive', if one does not want to answer group terrorism with state terrorism. Terrorism needs to be treated as an international crime, not as an act of war. The way the US government is treating those they have taken prisoner in Afghanistan as well as those who have been arrested in the United States shows great contempt for the procedures of international law. In view of the fear of terrorism the invocation of an exceptional state of emergency has found wide popular support in the United States

Perhaps even more striking than the lack of information and discussion in the public sphere about terrorism is the astounding ignorance of the American public about the role of the United States in world affairs, best expressed in the exclamation 'why do they hate us?' The terrorists who have attacked the United States were Arab Muslims and therefore terrorism has been interpreted as an expression of the clash between Western and Islamic civilizations. One could ask whether the fact that the terrorists are Muslims and Arabs is crucial. Attacks on civilians are common in terrorist activities all over the world. Underground stations in London have been bombed by the IRA; the Tokyo underground was gassed by Aum Shinrikyo, a Japanese sect; car bombs in Barcelona are regularly placed by ETA; Christian fundamentalists attack abortion clinics in the United States. Suicide bombers are also a common phenomenon in many parts of the world from the Tamil guerrillas in Sri Lanka who assassinated Rajiv Gandhi to leftist radicals in Turkey. In short, one does not have to be a Muslim and/or an Arab to launch suicide attacks against civilian targets. However, to commit suicide in an attack on one's enemy requires some ideology that justifies self-sacrifice for a higher cause. Martyrdom depends on an idea of the afterlife, but this does not have to be heaven or paradise or any other religiously described afterlife, but could just as well be the afterlife of one's people, the future of one's

nation (Anderson 1999). To die for a religion or a nation depends on ideas of connectedness with a larger community, secular or religious. However, religions all over the world have strong conceptions of good and evil, of the afterlife, and of just war, and Islam is no exception. As in Christianity, there are notions of martyrdom and self-sacrifice for the higher cause of religion. Moreover, Islam is, just like Christianity, a missionary religion, bent on conversion and spreading the message, and therefore has an assertive and sometimes aggressive aspect. Nevertheless, this is not the most important issue. More important is that religion in the modern world is directly connected to nationalist aspirations of various kinds and this is true for Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, as well as Islam.

In the case of Islam we are in general dealing with the poor and deprived areas of the world, especially Africa, the Middle East and Central, South, and Southeast Asia. The fact that nowadays so many radical and terrorist groups are Muslim should therefore not come as a surprise. Large populations in the impoverished South are Muslim and Islam provides the language of social justice that these groups use to fight the regimes which marginalize them. These regimes are often supported by the United States and its allies. This fuels the idea that there is a global conspiracy against the Muslim poor both through economic deprivation and through moral and political oppression. When these Muslims are Arab, the injustices of the Palestinian situation and the humiliation felt in the Arab region caused by Israeli and American supremacy are added to the general picture. Being a Muslim and being an Arab have to be historicized instead of being understood from some perspective as an essential Islam or Arab-ness. Regular wars have all been lost by Arab nations. The last one that was defeated by conventional warfare was Iraq. Terrorism is an instrument to attain goals that cannot be achieved by other means.

Western audiences have not been well informed by their media about terrorism and about the geopolitical role of the United States in Asia and Africa. The popular support for President Bush's 'War on Terrorism' that is shown in a number of public opinion polls in the United States and the similar (though somewhat more hesitant) support for it in Europe raises the issue of the relation between liberal democracy and warfare. It seems that rational political debate in the public sphere has much less to do with the weighty decision to wage war than war propaganda and the manufacturing of public consent. The response of the United States and its allies to global terrorism has been an attack on Afghanistan and subsequently on Iraq. This in itself is a sign of a profound misunderstanding of the globalized network society in which we live. What one will perceive as a 'success' in such a war will be subject to change in time and perspective. What will be the consequences of a war in Afghanistan for the entire Southern and Central Asian regions? It will have unintended consequences that may only surface in a decade, just as the unintended consequences of the first Gulf War surfaced only much later on 9/11. A crucial element will be the future stability of Pakistan, a nuclear power in perpetual contest with an increasingly Hindu nationalist India. The dangers of nuclear war in the region have already been

shown in the first half of the year 2002. Another crucial element is the connection between worldwide tourism and worldwide terrorism. The massacre of primarily Australian tourists in a holiday resort in Bali in 2002 has shown a clear example of this. The idea that this kind of conflict could be contained in the East worked in the earlier empires but not anymore, since the brothers and cousins of the people who die in Afghanistan by American hands live in Europe and the United States and their neighbors are on holiday in the areas where they come from.

It is increasingly clear that media representations are crucial for both the form of warfare and the understanding of it. These representations belong to a global capitalist system of production, circulation, and consumption in which the North is dominant, but an understanding of it in terms of world system theory with the North as center and the South as periphery is too static and one dimensional. A more culturally inflected understanding of disjunctures and differences in the current form of globalization could refer to Arjun Appadurai's delineation of mediascapes:

> Mediascapes, whether produced by private or state interests, tend to be image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements (such as characters, plots, and textual forms) out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places. These scripts can and do get disaggregated into complex sets of metaphors by which people live as they help to constitute narratives of the Other and protonarratives of possible lives, fantasies that could become prolegomena to the desire for acquisition and movement.
>
> (Appadurai 1996: 35–36)

Rather than taking the liberal account of the public sphere in modern democracies as the starting point for a comparison between societies that are considered democratic and progressive and those that are considered authoritarian and underdeveloped, the present volume wants to examine media responses to 9/11 in different mediascapes without assuming too much about the nexus public–media–politics. It is increasingly clear that media connect to complex cultural imaginations of the self, of the community, of the nation, of the global environment in an interplay of the local and the global that is not predetermined. Broadly speaking, this volume is mainly concerned with the mediascapes that are connected with the nation-states of Turkey, Iran, India, Malaysia, and Indonesia, but it is at the same time clear that they do only partially coincide with the mappings of national territories. Even more importantly there is a constant interaction and intertextuality between media that originate in very different places and constitute different mediascapes. Considering the huge importance of the United States, both in warfare and in information and entertainment, it is crucial to examine the development of the public sphere and the media in the United States. To say then that this volume is about Asian and

Middle Eastern media responses to 9/11 and its aftermath in the war on terrorism is not incorrect, but also does not stress sufficiently that interactions in the mediascape are truly global.

The media coverage of the events of 9/11 in the United States and their aftermath has shown us more than ever before some of the differences in perspectives between the United States, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Arguments in political theory about the existence of open, critical debate in liberal societies in the West have to be re-examined, just like arguments about the impossibility of such debates in the rest of the world. A fascinating illustration of this is offered by Western responses to Al-Jazeera, a satellite channel broadcast in Arabic from Qatar with a viewing audience estimated at 35 million. The leadership of Qatar does not want to interfere with the channel, which is thus free of censorship. Because of its presence in Afghanistan during the war, and even more that it was given the videotape on which Osama bin Laden clarified his political vision, Al-Jazeera gained worldwide prominence. The US media were pressurized by the government 'in the national interest' not to broadcast bin Laden's videotape and Qatar's ruler, Shaikh Hamad Khalifa al-Thani, told reporters during a visit to Washington that he had been advised by his hosts to have the channel toned down. On November 13, 2002, a US bomb 'accidentally' struck Al-Jazeera's office in Kabul. The use of the media as an instrument of warfare both in the Gulf War and in the Afghan War further forces us to analyze the construction of public opinion in electronic warfare. It also forces us to clarify the role of secrecy not only in terrorist operations, but also in the public sphere itself.

Arguments about an emergent transnational public sphere have to take into account that states are still very powerful in their attempts to control information and secret intelligence and that this is no different in the West than it is in Asia. Moreover, while the West seems largely unified in its media coverage and public debate (or lack thereof), there are important differences in the Middle East and Asia. This book intends first of all to describe these differences and to explain them in terms of politics and of the history of the media in different regions.

The present volume is divided into a section examining some general issues concerning media responses to 9/11 and a section of case studies dealing with Iran, the Middle East, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Turkish-speaking community in the UK. In his contribution, Peter van der Veer discusses the theory of the liberal public sphere as the lynchpin of Western democratic systems in light of an analysis of the connection between information and entertainment. He notes the interdependence of technologies of communication and technologies of warfare and observes that this produces a postmodern condition in which modern assumptions about the public sphere have become less useful. Van der Veer points out that the current form of globalization makes it both impossible to define a project of Enlightenment universalism as carried by Western power and to define a set of bounded, territorialized civilizations. The perspectives of the so-called East are also very much present in the so-called West and transnational migration enables as much contemporary forms of

capitalism as contemporary forms of terrorism. Van der Veer argues that the life-world of growing numbers of people in the world is drastically transformed by new economic regimes and that this elicits new religious responses all over the globe, enabled by the new technologies of communication.

Larry Gross and Sasha Costanza-Chock argue in this volume that one has to see the development of the present global media regime as a play in two acts. The first is the Cold War and the failed attempts of UNESCO and the non-aligned movement to create a new information order in which news presentations would take different perspectives into account instead of only the Western viewpoint. The second act is the new world order after the Gulf War and the collapse of the Berlin Wall, in which the old divisions of the First, Second and Third Worlds are replaced by that of the West and the Rest, or North and South. This time the opposition comes from both the right and the left, united in their opposition against globalization, although on very different grounds. The digital age obviously brings something new to play in the familiar battles about the unequal flow of information, but the authors are cautious in their assessment of it in light of their discussion of the post-World War II controversies about media, markets, and regulation.

Shoma Munshi examines in ethnographic detail the representations of the 9/11 attacks and their aftermath in the US corporate news media as well as in discussions on the Internet. Clearly this representation is not limited to the United States considering the global impact of US news channels. Her account of the televised images and narrative of 9/11 highlights the nature of reporting news as 'it happens', and conveys the shock of 9/11 but does not stop there. Munshi goes on to analyze how images and interpretation of news themselves exist in the dual sense of both representation and misrepresentation. Her contribution raises important questions about censorship, propaganda, and public debate in an open society.

Dale Eickelman's contribution marks the transition from the general chapters to the case studies. He engages directly with the theoretical issue of democracy and the public sphere in the Middle East. Contrary to the often encountered assertion that there exist not even the roots of democracy in the Arab authoitarian states, Eickelman shows that what is sometimes called 'the Arab street' is developing in a public sphere in which information is available and criticism is expressed. He examines in some detail the way in which the Arab channel Al-Jazeera has developed into a major player in the creation of public opinion in the Arab world. He also addresses the use of the media by Osama bin Laden and his group as thoroughly modern and extremely skilled propaganda.

Mahmoud Alinejad deals with the case of Iran, from which we have already learned in the Iranian Revolution that 'the street' shows not only crowd behavior but also informed, radical politics. Indeed, free democratic elections are regularly held in Iran to the astonishment of many Western observers. After the ousting of the US-backed authoritarian, but secular regime of the Shah, the United States has been a prime image of the devil in Iranian politics. Moreover, martyrdom as a political instrument in the form of suicide bombers has a strong backing in

Shiite sensibilities and theologies, from which it seems to have spread to radical Sunni groups. Iran, therefore, is an important player in the geopolitics of the war on terrorism. Alinejad explores the responses in the Iranian media to the war on terrorism and notes some interesting conspiracy theories that inform public opinion. Like Eickelman and van der Veer, he draws attention to the religious aspects of the public sphere that are insufficiently theorized in studies of modern society.

Manoj Joshi speaks directly from his experience as a leading journalist in India about the threat that terrorism and the war on terrorism pose to a free press. India is known for its free and active press and can in that way be compared to the press in Western democracies. At the same time India has faced insurgencies, terrorism of all kinds, and an unstable situation on its borders with China and Pakistan for a very long time now, without feeling the urge to counter this with exceptional governmental powers to curtail press freedom, except for the brief Emergency period under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi from 1975 to 1977. Joshi points out that 9/11 marked a new departure in countering terrorism in the United States through the Patriot Act of 2001. The change in international opinion about terrorism allowed the Indian government to come up with a draconian Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) but this was changed in Parliament to allow journalists to do their work without being immediately forced to report any information on terrorism to the authorities. Joshi's contribution shows the extent to which global events like 9/11 get connected to national events like the attack on the Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001, and lead to similar discussions about press freedom in the United States, the UK, and India.

The secular press in India about which Joshi writes is one element in the print media, the other is the religious press. Irfan Ahmad has examined closely the publications of the Indian branch of the Islamicist Jama'at-i-Islami, a politico-religious movement that has been very influential in South Asia and the Middle East. One of the major themes surfacing in the English language publication *Radiance* as well as in the Urdu publication *Sehrosa Dawat* is the Jewish Conspiracy that is also mentioned in Alinejad's contribution on Iran and Goenawan Mohamad's contribution on Indonesia. It is striking that the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is used everywhere in the region as an interpretive framework to understand US foreign policy. There is a strong suspicion that 9/11 happened as a conspiracy of the Jews to defame the Muslims and make attacks on them possible. It is unsettling to find anti-Semitic conspiracy theories flourishing in areas where one can hardly find a Jewish presence

Tjahjo Purnomo Wijadi's contribution is based on a detailed empirical study of two leading Indonesian newspapers, *Jawa Pos* and *Kompas*, and their coverage of the WTC tragedy and the US war on Afghanistan. Reading his chapter, one can follow the decision taken by editors to allow some expressions, some headlines, and some interpretations rather than others. Wijadi's theoretical framework is based on Johan Galtung's opposition of war journalism that takes sides and peace journalism that tries to cover as much of the different perspectives as possible.

Goenawan Mohamad, one of Indonesia's leading intellectuals, was in New York at the moment of the attack of 9/11 and he attempts to analyze the symbols used to interpret the event and its target, the Twin Towers. Some Indonesians have interpreted the target as a symbol of US power and arrogance, even as a symbol of Jewish financial influence; others have interpreted it as a symbol of victimhood. Some American politicians have interpreted the attack as a second Pearl Harbor, but Goenawan points out that some others have used a language of evil and infinite justice that is in fact close to that of the Islamicist terrorists themselves. His contribution expresses an anguish and distrust about the US response to 9/11 that is widely shared in the Middle East and Asia.

Farish Noor has written a gripping story about the localization of a global conflict in the political arena of Malaysia. He demonstrates that the enthusiasm of one of Malaysia's major political parties for Osama bin Laden, expressed in calls to support a jihad against the United States, was directly connected to a struggle for gaining the Islamic high ground in Malaysian politics that had gone on for a long time. The fact that this party supported a lost cause does not diminish the long-term importance of an Islamicist political theology that influences national politics in all Middle Eastern and Asian arenas. Farish Noor also connects the political development in Malaysia with developments in popular culture (selling of Osama bin Laden T-shirts) that directly fuel Islamicist rhetoric.

Finally, Asu Aksoy reminds us of the fact that civilizations are not geographically divided and that transnational migration is an aspect of globalization that brings everyone in direct contact with everyone else. She discusses the precarious situation of Turkish migrants in the UK. As Muslims and 'outsiders', their political and religious loyalty is always scrutinized in the national media, but this becomes a more pressing issue in the war on terrorism. She challenges the argument that these migrant groups turn to 'their own' media for information and presents a much more complex picture about the ways in which Turks in the UK used the media to form an opinion about the events of 9/11 and later. Hers is an empirical study of focus group discussions and it shows the importance of secularism for these Turkish migrants combined with an ambivalence, both about the Islamicist cause and about US politics. She also warns rightly against assuming too much about media effects and the ways people respond to information.

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2 War propaganda and the liberal public sphere

Peter van der Veer

Introduction

A decade ago the Gulf War ended with a tickertape parade in Manhattan for General Schwarzkopf and other American heroes who had returned victorious from the battlefield. Also around ten years ago the Russian War in Afghanistan ended in a defeat of the Russians. Afghanistan had been Russia's Vietnam and, in some readings, Russia's defeat had led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and thus, again, the victory of the United States. Some philosophers even thought that history had ended with the end of the competition between capitalism and communism. But perhaps neither history nor these wars themselves ended. Ten years later Manhattan was the target of an attack, in which a majority of young Saudis, strongly opposed to the presence of the US military in Saudi Arabia near the Islamic holy places, during and after the Gulf War, played a dominant role. This protest had been voiced in many ways by religious leaders who criticized King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, 'the guardian of the two noble Sanctuaries' (Mecca and Medina), but the religious form of the protest and its significance in the Saudi polity had been ignored, since it was hardly recognizable and interpretable for Western media. In one of the many ironies of recent history, the CIA had brought many of the radical opponents of the close collaboration between the Saudi regime and the Americans to Afghanistan where they had successfully driven the Russians away, but subsequently had helped their fundamentalist Pathan allies, the Taliban, to establish a radical Islamic state. The most important of the Arab supporters of the Taliban was Osama bin Laden, a Saudi millionaire who used Afghanistan as a base for an anti-American terrorist network, called Al-Qaeda. The Americans therefore decided to attack Afghanistan in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack on New York and Washington, and the war 'ended' with an American victory in Afghanistan. But, again, the seeds of a new war were already visible in the relatively fast toppling of the Taliban regime. President Bush Jr. decided that he should finish what his father had not accomplished in the first Gulf War, namely the ousting of Saddam Hussein, the leader of Iraq, together with his entire regime. With the Bush family in charge in these wars, one gets the feeling of watching a television miniseries with different episodes.

Perhaps even more than infotainment, wars are like news items: they focus attention on something, on some region, for a while, but the attention span of the world's audience is short and soon other news items come up and the audience forgets the continuity of history while it is looking somewhere else. The first Gulf War was in many ways the precursor of the War in Afghanistan. There are some obvious differences also. The Gulf War was a response to the invasion of the US ally, Kuwait, by Iraq, a regional power, led by a dangerous dictator, while the recent war was a response to an attack on the United States, in which 3000 American civilians were killed. The solidarity with 'our troops' in the latter case therefore was a 'given' and did not have to be created by a folk ritual of 'yellow ribbons'. In both cases vital oil and gas interests of American companies were crucial in the decision-making process (Klare 2000). The first Gulf War dealt with interstate warfare, while the war in Afghanistan and the second Gulf war were called 'the global war on terrorism', although in fact it was miniaturized into the Afghan and Iraqi war theatres and the focus continued to be on states rather than on terrorist networks. While the first Gulf War dealt with an invasion of one Arab country by another, the present war had, at least ostensibly, to deal with Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda, a particular form of transnational Muslim terrorism. Despite these differences we can still learn from the first Gulf War when we examine the relation between media, warfare, and public debate.

In this chapter I want to explore some questions about media, postmodern warfare, and the transformation of the transnational public sphere. First of all, I want to suggest that there is an uncanny relationship between infotainment and postmodern warfare. Second, I want to argue that liberal philosophers assume a really existing public sphere as the basis of Western democracy, but ignore the role of the media as well as the role of religion in political debate and political action. Third, I want to suggest that there is an uncanny connection between developments in religion, media, and warfare. I want to begin by examining the well-studied media representation of the first Gulf War.

The Gulf War

The Gulf War received unprecedented media coverage. However, it also raised fundamental questions about the nature of this coverage. First of all, there is the general problem of war propaganda: coverage as cover-up, the orchestration of the news by the Pentagon. It is the spreading of disinformation or straight falsehood, such as the famous story that Iraqi soldiers had killed Kuwaiti incubator babies by stealing the incubators and bringing them as war loot to Baghdad. Even more importantly, it is the framing of the narrative of the war in the mythological terms of World War II: Saddam Hussein as the Great Dictator who had invaded a small neighbor, Kuwait, just as Hitler had invaded Czechoslovakia. The logic of the narrative thus required an immediate response by the world powers in order not to repeat the earlier, historical mistake. The most important element of the media cover-up, however, seems to have been the almost complete erasure of Arab bodies, of Arab voices, of Arab history. This

was possible, because of the domination of the mediascape by the West and thus the lack of challenges from Arab media.

Virillio (1991) has argued that the Gulf War was a local war in terms of its battlefield, but a global war in terms of its representation and in terms of its tele-command based on satellite communications and perception. The image of the desert as the battlefield, emptied of history and real presence, made the war resemble a video game, a virtual reality. Baudrillard (1991) went even so far as to ask whether the Gulf War ever really happened. The tele-visual power of new military technologies displaces the human encounter on the battlefield and indeed displaces the battlefield as a territorial notion. It is right to extend President Eisenhower's notion of a military–industrial complex by speaking, as Der Derian (2001) does, of a military–industrial–media–entertainment complex, MIME in short, with complexly interwoven institutional powers. In the US Army's National Training Center at Fort Irwin, at the Central Command in Fort Knox in Tampa, and in many other sites, wars are simulated in synthetic theaters of war. Distinctions between the simulated and the real begin to break down when one realizes that the Iran–Iraq War was first played out as a macro-strategic game on video which the consulting company BDM International sold to Iraq and that the invasion of Kuwait was similarly rehearsed by the Iraqi military in the form of computer simulations.

The techno-scape of warfare so much depends on the virtuality of the computer screen that it connects profoundly to the virtual reality of media representations, broadcast in real time, on the television screen. Television turns us into armchair imperialists, audio-visual masters of the world, as Stam (1992) puts it. The question of representation and truth becomes even more vexed than usual under the circumstances of a hyperreal in which nothing has a clear authenticity or is outside a play of signifiers. It is especially the embodied identity that gets lost in the information superhighway as will be acknowledged by anyone who has participated in chat rooms and the like. Experiments by Milgram and Zimbardo about the relationship between torturers and their victims lead us to argue that technological remoteness creates a morality of action, that is a moral responsibility to perform well in military action, which replaces a morality of substance, that is subject to substantive assessment of behavior as either good or bad (see Bauman 1989). The causal link between action and the suffering of the victim can be easily ignored. While this is already the case for those who are directly engaged in technological violence, it is further enhanced for television audiences by the vicarious participation in violence made possible by infotainment. Specific solidarities and identifications with one's own people as opposed to a demonized 'Other' are created and reinforced by the media. To some extent there is a manipulation of the news, an editing of what is presented: for example, the so-called 'turkey-shoot' of thousands of Iraqis fleeing on the six-lane highway from Kuwait City was regarded as too horrendous to put on television. But more generally it is the mediated distantiation, visually and emotionally, from the 'Other' as real, historical human beings with their own lives and motivations that helps in shaping a reality that resembles Hollywood

representations of aliens attacking the planet or, in the recent movie *Pearl Harbor*, the Japanese attacking the United States. There is a kind of intertextuality between war coverage, Hollywood movies, television miniseries, and video games that has created a virtual reality that seems to be open primarily to metaphysical, mystic, Manichean interpretations in which both Christian televangelists and Muslim video-preachers specialize. Both bin Laden's division of the world into good and evil and Bush's imitation of it seem to connect virtual and virtuous realities in a dazzling fashion. The assault on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center itself seemed to participate uncannily in this hyperreality from which the terrorists expected immediate salvation.

It seems to me that there is much more at stake here than war propaganda as such, more than deliberate disinformation and lies, for which the Pentagon now appears to have created a new bureau. It is not so much that audiences are misinformed or just badly informed and that they would be choosing differently and acting differently if they were better informed. The dominance of American news agencies combined with the power of American popular audio-visual culture has made the media into a crucial element of both the global war machine and collective identity. Those outside of its reach need to be converted and, since missionaries are not so successful with Islam, pop culture may have a try. Norman Pattiz, founder and chairman of Westwood One, the $3.5 billion company that is largest distributor of commercial radio programming in the United States, has been asked by the Bush Administration to oversee an innovative radio network aimed at bringing American values and pop culture to Arabs in the Middle East with a budget of $30 million. It will broadcast twenty-four hours a day and will devote most of that time to playing a blend of Western and Arab pop music. Twice an hour, five-minute news segments in Arabic, reported by American-sponsored journalists, interrupt the music. In the Manichean struggle between Good and Evil, Good is represented by pop culture. This raises fundamental questions about the relation between the media and the public sphere.

The liberal public sphere

Some sixty leading American intellectuals, most of whom are high-powered academics teaching ethics, religion, and public policy at American universities and think-tanks, have a view of the defense of American values which is not rooted in Norman Pattiz's American pop culture but in the European Enlightenment. In an open letter on why the war on terrorism is necessary and just, published in *The Washington Post* of February 12, 2002, they refer to four values that they view as the founding ideals of the United States. These values are the following:

1 Human dignity of all persons is politically expressed in democracy.
2 Universal moral truths do exist.

3 Disagreements about values call for civility, openness, and reasonable argument.
4 Freedom of conscience and freedom of religion.

The authors think that these founding ideals of the United States are under attack from Islamicist terrorists and that a war against them is a just war. In Europe the British politician Chris Patten (2002), European Commissioner for External Relations, has recently given a similar justification of the war on terrorism. However, Patten refers not only to enlightened ideals but also to the literary work of Rudyard Kipling to explain the war on terrorism. This is a telling reference, since it is indeed this combination between high ideals and expansionist politics that characterized the old 'Great Game' as it does the new imperialism. For Kipling, the British had a moral duty to bring civilization to the rest of the world, so that the issue is less the defense of one's civilization against the barbarism of others than the conversion of others to Western values. Kipling, obviously, wrote at the height of British imperial power. American intellectuals, on the other hand, can only view the war against terrorism in terms of defense by ignoring the role of the United States as global superpower. What concerns us here, however, is that the intervention by these intellectuals by way of an open letter in one of the US leading national newspapers is based on the crucial assumption of the real existence of a liberal public sphere and of a civilized or civil society in which freedom of expression and conscience together with rational argumentation define modern democracy. At the same time the existence of civil society and public sphere defines modern civilization as a universal ideal that happens to have been realized in the United States. Finally, the universality of moral truths is asserted, while disagreements about which truths are universal have to be discussed in an open debate. This set of assumptions is undoubtedly important and needs further reflection.

In my understanding civil society stands for institutions and social movements that are independent enough from the state to be critical of it, while public sphere stands for the spaces, sites, and technologies available for public discourse that is critical of the state. The possibility of public criticism of the state and its policies marks the distinction between dictatorship and political freedom. Obviously, there is a constant debate about the limits and procedures of political freedom under the rule of law, but the principle of public criticism is crucial. The concepts of civil society and public sphere, as distinct from the state, are fundamental to liberal, political theory. Despite the influence of Marxism on his thinking, this is also true for Habermas's (1989) understanding of the public sphere. Crucial to his theory is a modernist emphasis on a particular kind of secular rationality and subjectivity. This effectively requires the subject to be modern and excludes the subject that is (as yet) not modern. Habermas does not give religious argumentation or religious movements a place in the public sphere, since religion in his view is an obstacle to the freedom and rationality of debate, because of its absolutist claims on truth. The assumption is that society has to be secular before one can have a critical, public debate. There is a huge literature

discussing these concepts and the assumptions connected to them (see, for instance, Calhoun 1992, Taylor 1995, Chatterjee 1995) but I would like to focus on two elements of the public sphere that have not acquired enough attention and are crucial to our current discussion. The first is religion and the role of the media in it. The second is the counterpart of what is public, namely what one would call 'secret'.

Religion, media, and public sphere

The development of communication technologies is crucial not only to the military–industrial–media–entertainment nexus, but also to the public sphere and to religion. In theories of the secular public sphere, religion under modern conditions is perceived as belonging to the private sphere, but this is more a secularist dream than an empirical reality in the majority of modern societies. Anderson (1991) has argued that one particular media revolution, the rise of print capitalism, has had a profound impact on the way human societies imagine themselves as nations. While his interest is in the rise of a secular national consciousness – crucial to the formation of civil society and public sphere – he also pays some attention to the ways in which religion has been transformed by this media revolution. Of course, it is not new to emphasize the importance of print culture on the rise of Luther and on the entire Protestant Reformation. It is also not new to connect the emergence of national territories with the Protestant break with Catholic unity. The power of Anderson's intervention is that he connects these accepted historical facts with an interpretation of modern consciousness, influenced by Auerbach (1957) and Benjamin (1973). According to Anderson, nations imagine themselves horizontally, simultaneously, and evenly, thanks to a new conception of time, measured by clock and calendar. For Anderson this new conception of time also enables a new literary genre, the novel, where things happen simultaneously by actors who are unaware of each other, and for the newspaper, informing us of 'current events' in the nation. He emphasizes how different this modern, secular conception of 'homogeneous, empty time' is of the preceding Christian one of prefiguring and fulfillment. Modern consciousness, in his view, is thus both secular and national. Despite his awareness of the Protestant Reformation he posits a sharp break between a religious worldview and a modern, secular one. This opposition of religious tradition and secular modernity is in fact a dominant trope of most accounts of modernity in Western social science and philosophy that is based on an anti-religious trend in the European Enlightenment.

A serious, non-ideological engagement with religion under modern conditions, however, shows that religious institutions and religious movements take part in the production of the modern self and continue to play a public, political role in most societies even in the so-called secular West. This is true for most Western societies as indeed for any other society (van der Veer and Lehmann 1999) but most strikingly for the United States, industrially the most advanced and dominant society today.

There is no doubt that the research institutions in the United States are the major sites of production of scientific and technological knowledge in the contemporary world. At the same time a Gallup poll in the mid-1970s showed that over one-third of adult Americans (50 million Americans) described themselves as 'born-again', that is as having experienced 'a turning point in your life and when you committed yourself to Jesus Christ and felt "that the Bible is the actual Word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word" '(Harding 2000). These Americans are active in the public sphere as the so-called 'Moral Majority'. Do these two facts – scientific productivity and religious activism in the public sphere – in one society conflict? In fact, they do not; except for the debate about creationism and evolutionism that is, in fact, marginal to most scientific debate. Even the fact that so many Americans are biblical literalists does not seem to affect their participation in the scientific and technological activities of their society. Does this imply that there is a separation of spheres that are relatively autonomous? This is only the case in the sense that laboratories and churches are different sites for the production of knowledge and that these forms of knowledge have different effects, but not in the sense that they can be reified as separate spheres. The relative irrelevance of science for religious doctrine and vice versa does not marginalize the public role of religious institutions and movements in the United States. Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority was perhaps the most important political movement in the United States in the 1980s and even the younger Bush's campaign for presidency in the late 1990s depended crucially on Christian fundamentalist backing. The support it gave to the military–industrial complex in its Christian patriotism has been of crucial importance to the funding of scientific research for military purposes including the development of the Internet. The development of new forms of virtual action and communication has been and will be overwhelmingly dependent on military research (Robins and Webster 1999). Moreover, the Moral Majority movement has made ample use of the technological advances in communications and consumption (telemarketing, television, theme parks) to bring the message of the literal truth of the Bible. This continued in the 1990s with the full use of the new communication technologies by these movements. What is particularly striking is the extent to which these movements occupy the same terrain as secular humanist movements and with a similar flexibility and versatility. They are not outside modernity, but fully part of it. Considering their patriotic support of the build-up of US military power, one finds an uncanny connection between the virtuous and the virtual in the Moral Majority which is quite different from the Enlightenment view expressed in the letter of American intellectuals, discussed above.

It is crucial to realize that one is referring here not only to the production of a religious public, but also to that of a religious private. Not only is the imagination of community important here, but also the imagination of 'the self'. The mediation and virtuality involved in modern technologies of communication, earlier the printed book and now the Internet, have a profound impact on the content and effects of religious communication. Religion is not only mediated,

but is also crucially concerned with the forms and practices of mediation. According to William James (1985) [1901] religion is founded on the subjective experience of an invisible presence. This may be true, but we only have access to that subjective experience through the mediation of concrete practices, such as speaking, writing, acts of worship, while, at the same time, these acts may be considered to produce the experience. There is a whole range of activities that induce religious dispositions and are about the relation between human subjects and, what I would like to call provisionally for lack of a better term, 'the supernatural'. Crucial in that mediation is the relative invisibility of the supernatural or, perhaps better, its virtuality. There is always in religious mediation an ambiguity about the addressee and about the arrival of the message that is connected to epistemological uncertainty. Technologies of communication, such as print or the Internet, create a new sense not only of community and the public sphere, but also of the self. The act of reading in private shields one from direct interactions with the immediate life-world, while linking one to a larger world of virtual interactions. The same seems to be true for the Internet. It is the act of reading and writing that constitutes the world of print, but also the world of the Internet. My suggestion here is that, analogous to the religious transformations, such as the Protestant Reformation, enabled by the print revolution, there are religious transformations today, enabled by the information revolution. Similar to the transformations in infotainment and warfare, there are transformations in current religious configurations that are crucial to the emergence of transnational, radical forms of 'born-again' Christianity that informs the Bush Administration. While in the nineteenth-century Protestant Tract and Bible societies, as well as a mass-produced visual culture, produced the ideal of a Christian America in the public sphere, in the late twentieth century new communication technologies are used to produce new images of saintly sacrifice and Christian solidarity, in which the global mission of the United States is enshrined (Morgan 1999). These new communication technologies are also, however, crucial to the 'born-again' Islamicism that informs the Al-Qaeda network.

Recently, Roy (2002) has distinguished several responses to globalization by Muslims. The first is the so-called 'salafist' that stresses the return to an original and authentic Islam, but in doing so goes against the ethnicization of Islam. A general tendency of ethnic division among Muslim groups and societies has been rejected as 'fitna' (division) in Islamic thought and the 'salafists' or 'new fundamentalists' make use of this to preach a global Islam transcending ethnic and national divisions. The second is a process of individualization in which individual belief instead of social conformism is the basis of Islamic behavior. To be a 'true' Muslim is more a personal choice and a matter of internal conversion than the result of social pressure. It is here that we can understand the success of a number of Muslim movements that produce a kind of 'born-again' Muslim. Third, there is an expansion of web sites where self-appointed experts on Islamic thought and behavior teach their version. This creates a new sphere of Muslim communication and debate in which the traditional interpreters of the tradition, the 'ulama', play a diminished role. In this debate, however, it is not 'liberal

Islam', promoted by such thinkers as the Algerian Muhammad Arkoun, which is prevalent. Rather it is the more literalist or even fundamentalist arguments that are dominant. These developments do not show conservatism, but quite significant transformations that bring 'born-again' Muslims, so to say, in direct conflict with their own fellow Muslims who try to continue some of their ethnic–religious practices in a new environment.

One could argue that there is an emerging Muslim public sphere in the Muslim world (Eickelman and Anderson 1999). This sphere is transnational and cannot be controlled by the regimes of the various Muslim states. The Internet especially allows a growing literate public to discuss and interpret the sacred traditions. Some of this resembles the Protestant Reformation in the way the new media enable direct, personal access to religious truth without the hierarchical mediation of an exclusive class of learned interpreters. One should, however, not take the comparison with sixteenth-century Protestantism too far. What we see in the Muslim world is much more comparable with nineteenth- and twentieth-century Protestantism in which mass education and growing literacy are combined with the rapid expansion of mass-mediated images and visual symbolism. In the Muslim world there is a growing market for audio and videocassettes of popular preachers and their sermons and discussions are the subject of debate on the Internet. What one finds here are mixed genres of argumentation, derived from science, from popular culture, from human rights discourse, and from Islamic traditions. The intertextuality of soap operas, patterns of mass consumption, advertising strategies, and religious exchange in the Muslim world reminds one very much of televangelism in the United States. Notions of secularization cannot capture this interlacing of secular and religious communication.

An earlier generation of Muslim reformers, such as Maududi, the founder of the South Asian Jama'at-i-Islami or Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, already belonged to a professional class outside of the traditional Islamic learned circles. Today there is a transnational class of engineers, doctors, and professional men that constitutes the avant-garde of Islamic reform. For this class the old Enlightenment opposition of science and religion does not pertain. Somehow it came as a shock to Western liberal media that the assault on the United States had been conducted by highly trained Muslim engineers. The British newspaper the *Guardian* carried the following argument by an American philosopher:

> It is a modern thought that faith is antagonistic to reason. Scientific reasoning does not sit easily with the presuppositions of any religion, and the work of Enlightenment philosophers made the belief in God appear irrational. … It is easy to imagine Mohammed Atta, at Hamburg University, encountering the dichotomy between faith and modern reason, and turning to a form of Islam untempered by any rational morality. But, if so, Atta, like many others, followed a path first laid out in the 'Modern West'.
>
> (Fleischacker 2001)

The strong presence of engineers and scientists in Muslim fundamentalist movements which is noted in work on Iran, Turkey, Indonesia, and Malaysia is indeed something that requires some thought, but it is not a separation of faith and science that allows them to participate in these movements. On the contrary, I would argue that specific affinities between spirituality and science allow this participation. In the case of Islam it is a newly militarized spirituality, which enables a radical negation of a conventional view of spirituality as composed of compassionate and merciful acts. This depends on a counter-orientalist argument that posits a spiritual, moral East that can use rationality and science for the welfare of humankind and a materialistic, morally debased West that uses them to colonize and humiliate others. As Tavakoli-Targhi (2002) has argued, one finds among these radical Muslims, such as Mohammed Atta, a readiness to destroy the hateful 'Other' of Western civilization by going on a spiritual journey of physical self-annihilation in martyrdom.

The terrorist activity of the Al-Qaeda network shows us the other side of the public sphere: secrecy. One of the most striking aspects of the assault on the United States on September 11 is the extent to which small groups of determined radicals can escape the surveillance of the modern state. Despite the enormous increase in technologies of intelligence and surveillance it turns out that modern society is very vulnerable to this kind of attack. On the face of it, one would consider this kind of secret operation by radical groups to be the opposite of the public sphere. Indeed, criticism of the state in open discussions to which everyone has access seems a defining feature of the public sphere. One could, however, also suggest that there is a dialectic between what is public and what is secret. The historian Reinhart Koselleck (1988) has argued that the emergence of secret societies of freemasonry had been crucial in the development of Enlightenment critique of the absolutist state. In the mid-eighteenth century the masonic lodges saw an immense increase in membership and can be seen as the most important sites for the new sociability of the Enlightenment, besides the more public ones such as coffeehouses, clubs, salons, and literary societies. For me, the important point in this is that these lodges were able to erect a wall of protection for their debates and rituals both against intrusion from the state and against intrusion from the 'profane' world. Religion is a privileged site for examining this aspect of secrecy that is simultaneously the opposite of the public sphere and foundational for it. Religious movements and religious sites are often suspected of secret conspiracy by the powers that be. It is precisely the moving away from state institutions and official politics that gives possibilities for fundamental moral critique. It should be clear that critique could take an unpleasant and terrorist form like it did in the Jacobin ideology of the French Revolution. This uncomfortable dialectic is exactly what German theorists were interested in after the Nazi period. While Koselleck's analysis is close to Adorno and Horkheimer's view of the dialectic of the Enlightenment, Habermas (1973) chose to focus on the liberating side of the public sphere and therefore has criticized Koselleck's view that totalitarianism finds its roots in the dialectic between absolutism and Enlightenment critique.

In dealing with civil society and the public sphere we tend to focus on voluntary association and human networks, but in the postmodern network society of today we need to pay more attention to technologies of communication. As Anderson (1999: 53) puts it, 'Technology, not association, enables participation and is the means of participation in a space defined by taking it upon oneself to participate.' The kind of virtual interactions, enabled by the Web, is characterized by indeterminacy and secrecy. The decentralized nature of the Internet even allows secrecy at the level of authorship which copyright has made difficult in the world of print. The new technologies of communication enable not only electronic warfare and the mediated participation in it by a world audience, but also the radical and terrorist responses to it.

Conclusion

The open letter by the American intellectuals in *The Washington Post* was called a 'letter from America', but one is tempted to ask: addressed to whom? One of the signatories of the letter, Samuel Huntington, had argued earlier that a clash of civilizations was the new global challenge after the collapse of the Soviet Union and that the West should withdraw itself within its own civilizational boundaries, protecting its own identity. Huntington (1996) concluded in his book that the United States should be monocultural while accepting that the world would be multicultural. However, a crucial element of the global network society today is that the boundaries of the United States, defining what is inside and what is outside, are unclear. More generally, civilizations have no location, no boundaries anymore, so that one cannot define a world of Islam outside of a world of Christianity (van der Veer 1999). Transnational migration brings everyone face to face. This is a defining element of globalization, and, as such, the basis of the new economy, but also of new religious movements and of the emergence of a transnational public sphere, in which the universality of moral truths is not denied, but in which there is a conflict about which truths are universal and how to convert others to them. To think that secular worldviews have spread less violently than religious ones is to ignore world history. The technologies of transport and communication developed under the present conditions of global forms of production and consumption define the transformation of the life-world of a growing number of people, but also the religious responses to it. It is especially the constant shuttling between countries of origin and countries of immigration that constitutes a transnational field. In the transnational public sphere there are large numbers of people who are on the move and the history of at least some of them makes them critical of the international order and the hegemony of the United States. They also have the civilizational resources to suggest other possible forms of modernity, of economy, of politics, and of civil society. These global projects are in general peaceful, but if Western civilization is spread by the sword one should not be surprised by violent responses.

This essay has tried to come to a better understanding of the connection between the virtual and the virtuous. In 1961, President Eisenhower spoke in his

Farewell Address to the Nation about the military–industrial complex as a threat to democracy. The military–industrial–media–entertainment network of today is an even greater departure from the Enlightenment values that are the basis of democracy. Taylor (2002) has recently asserted that central to Western modernity is a new conception of moral order. The current predicament is that moral visions with different genealogies clash in a transnational public sphere. These visions are communicated in media that mix the genres of the virtuous and the virtual.

The extent to which we now live in one connected mediascape is emphasized by the following incident. During the Afghan War, Osama bin Laden addressed the world through a video in which he communicated his disgust with US foreign policy. The video was filmed in a setting and with a rhetorical style reminiscent of Egyptian movies of the 1960s representing the time of the Prophet. That video was broadcast by the Arab network Al-Jazeera, but was withdrawn from American media under pressure from the White House because it contained war propaganda and perhaps hidden messages. We encounter a situation here in which an Arab station contributes to open newsgathering, while American media exert self-censorship. We also have here a situation in which a particular moral style is used to motivate a transnational Muslim audience, but also one in which the rest of the world is addressed by attacking the role of the United States in Israel. In this kind of unbounded mediascape with mixed genres, terrorist attacks by engineers look like video games and the responses to it have a mimetic quality. Public debate itself about the virtues of imagined world orders (enlightened, Islamic, or otherwise) seems not to be able to escape the indeterminate, continuous, secret nature of contemporary technologies of communication. The justification of war has to address the changing mediated nature of warfare, religious and other moral visions as well as the variety of audiences addressed in transnational public spheres.

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3 The West and the Rest

A drama in two acts and an epilogue

Larry Gross & Sasha Costanza-Chock

Act one: free flow, free press, free markets

The period following World War II witnessed the consolidation of the economic and cultural power of the United States. In this exhilarating era, the United States joined in promoting ambitious and noble-sounding efforts to guarantee universal human rights, without having to consider too carefully the consequences of taking these high-flown sentiments literally. Focused as they were on the importance of contrasting democracy with communism, the US authorities readily joined in the 1946 UN Declaration on Freedom of Information, which stated that:

> all states should proclaim policies under which the free flow of information within countries and across frontiers, will be protected. The right to seek and transmit information should be insured to enable the public to ascertain facts and appraise events
>
> (UN General Assembly Resolution 59 (1))

This was further strengthened by the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, passed by the General Assembly the same year, which includes the following: 'Everyone has a right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions … and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers' (Article 19).

At first these declarations were wielded as weapons in the Cold War struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union, with the United States and its Western allies accusing the communist regimes of subjecting their media to state control and censorship, and the Soviets denying the possibility of freedom of expression in countries in which a small number of capitalist corporations controlled the media. These debates took on an aura of ritual and routine trading of insults, but they were infused with renewed vigor in the late 1960s when the advent of satellite broadcasting raised the stakes. The Soviets argued that satellite broadcasts must be approved by the governments of countries in which they were received, and the Americans claimed that this would violate Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and threaten the 'free flow of information' (Gunter 1978).

Beyond the Cold War, although obviously not separable from Cold War considerations, the postwar period also saw the installation of an international economic order in which US-dominated bodies – the International Monetary Fund, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank), and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade – exercised power over the internal affairs of poorer countries, including many emerging from colonialism (Samarajiwa 1984). By the mid-1950s, many leaders of former colonies began to organize a 'third force' to provide a buffer between the 'First World' of US-led capitalism and the Soviet-dominated 'Second World'. The 1956 Bandung Conference in Indonesia, which signaled the debut of the 'Third World', represented a two-pronged attack on big power economic domination (neo-imperialism) and 'cultural imperialism'. The Third World faction itself represented an uneasy and unstable coalition between anti-capitalists out to revolutionize their countries, and local capitalists aiming to resist the competitive power of Western transnational corporations or at least force them to offer better terms (Singh and Gross 1981).

In the early days of the Cold War the United States saw the United Nations, and UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in particular, as an ally in pursuing its international goals. The UNESCO Charter, at the urging of the United States, committed the organization to 'advancing mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, through all means of mass communication', and to that end, it 'will recommend such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image' (cited in Mehan 1981: 159). During the Korean War – a period in which the Soviet Union was boycotting UNESCO and other UN bodies (the boycott lasted until 1954) – UNESCO was seen as friendly to US interests, to the extent that the *London News Chronicle* editorialized: 'American insistence that UNESCO enter the Cold War by spreading pro-Western, anti-Communist propaganda is producing a crisis which may wreck the organization' (quoted in Mehan 1981: 160).

By the late 1960s, however, as the ranks of the United Nations swelled with the addition of more than seventy former colonies, the United States began to experience resistance and even hostility from this previously compliant body. At a 1969 UNESCO meeting in Montreal there was a demand for a 'two-way circulation of news and the balanced circulation of news'. At the Fourth Summit Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement in Algiers in 1973 the Action Programme for Economic Co-operation included a declaration that 'developing countries should take concerted action in the field of mass communications … in order to promote a greater inter-change of ideas among themselves'. The Summit's documents further stressed the need for effective dissemination of information of importance to non-aligned countries to the international community through suitable information media to counteract the often tendentious, incorrect, non-objective, and inadequate coverage given in the international information media which are controlled by agencies of developed countries which presently practically monopolize the dissemination of world information and news (quoted in Samarajiwa, 1984: 111).

Thus was born the demand for a New International Information Order, or New World Information Order, and thus was joined a battle that roiled international politics for the next decade. In itself, there should be nothing very surprising in the concern expressed by Third World countries over the state of international news gathering and dissemination. In the early decades of the twentieth century US journalists bemoaned the dominance of the Reuters cartel, aligned with the French Havas and German Wolff agencies that controlled news entering and leaving the United States. Associated Press executive Kent Cooper, who fought to break the Reuters cartel, recounted the situation in his 1942 book, *Barriers Down*:

> So Reuters decided what news was to be sent from America. It told the world about Indians on the war path in the West, lynchings in the South and bizarre crimes in the North. The charge for decades was that nothing creditable to America was ever sent. American businessmen criticized the Associated Press for permitting Reuters to belittle America abroad. … Their own countries were always glorified. This was done by reporting great advances at home in English and French civilizations, the benefits of which would, of course, be bestowed on the world. Figuratively speaking, in the United States, according to Havas and Reuters, it wasn't safe to travel on account of Indians.
>
> (Quoted in Gunter 1978: 149)

As the non-aligned nations began flexing their muscles in international bodies, their complaints about international news flow echoed Cooper's brief against Reuters, especially in its denunciations of Western media's tendency to focus on bad news when reporting on the Third World. One observer, Martin Woollacott, noted that in the Philippines, few Western reporters 'visit model land reform projects in Luzon, but hundreds have gone down to Mindanao to cover the war between Muslim secessionists and the Government'. As a local official put it to Woollacott, 'It is as if Western reporters feel their job in any developing society is to identify that society's weakest points and biggest problems and then make them worse by exaggeration and unremitting publicity' (quoted in Lent 1977: 48). Systematic analyses supported these claims. A study of US TV news broadcasts during the mid-1970s showed that Third World nations received less coverage than developed nations, and that coverage of these countries contained a higher proportion of crisis stories than did coverage of developed nations. Three-quarters of the foreign film reports on Third World countries concerned crises (Larson 1979).

The US government was aware of the imbalance in international news flow, as noted in a 1979 report of the US International Communication Agency on 'The United States and the Debate on the World Information Order':

> The United States has been a massive supplier of media products to the rest of the world, but it uses very few foreign media products itself. International

> news reaches the U.S. largely through AP and UPI. The U.S. TV system is the second most 'closed' to foreign programming in the world. These facts, derived from the success and dynamism of U.S. private media, may limit our ability to see the world [and ourselves] through others' eyes.
>
> (Quoted in Ravault 1981: 131)

Officials in other countries were also concerned that their citizens increasingly saw the world through US eyes, absorbing US cultural and commercial values. In the 1970s, as these debates heated up, it was estimated, for example, that Guatemala imported 84 percent of its television programs, Zambia 64 percent, and Malaysia 73 percent; even in countries importing fewer programs these tended to dominate prime-time viewing (Varis 1974).

The resistance to neo-colonial cultural domination coalesced in 1978 in a statement, 'The New World Information Order', drafted by Tunisia's representative to UNESCO, Mustapha Masmoudi, that challenged the Western concept of 'free flow' as a cover for systematic imbalances (see Masmoudi 1979). The statement defined a series of imbalances:

1. A flagrant quantitative imbalance between North and South. … Almost 80% of the world news flows from the major transnational agencies; however these devote only 20 to 30% of news coverage to the developing countries [which] account for almost three-quarters of mankind.
2. An inequality in information resources. … The five major transnational agencies… control nearly 90% of the [radio frequency] spectrum, while the developing countries have no means of protecting themselves against foreign broadcasts.
3. A de facto hegemony and a will to dominate … exercised above all through the control of the information flow, wrested and wielded by the transnational agencies operating without let or hindrance.
4. A lack of information on developing countries. … By transmitting to the developing countries only news processed by them, that is, news which they have filtered, cut, and distorted, the transnational media impose their own way of seeing the world upon the developing countries.
5. Survival of the colonial era. … The present day information system enshrines a form of political, economic, and cultural colonialism which is reflected in the often tendentious interpretation of news concerning the developing countries.
6. An alienating influence in the economic, social, and cultural spheres. … [A]dvertising, magazines and television programs are today so many instruments of cultural domination and acculturation, transmitting to the developing countries messages which are harmful to their cultures, contrary to their values, and detrimental to their development aims and efforts.
7. Messages ill-suited to the areas in which they are disseminated. … The major mass media and those who work for them take no account of the real relevance of their messages. Their news coverage is designed to meet the

> national needs of their countries of origin. … They even ignore the important minorities and foreign communities living on their national territory, whose needs in matters of information are different from their own.
>
> (Masmoudi 1979: 173–175)

Masmoudi's indictment was lengthy and detailed, reflecting both familiar concerns voiced by media analysts and critics in Third World as well as First World countries and, especially in its anti-capitalist portions, by Eastern bloc representatives. The thrust of the argument underpinning the call for a new information order was that

> there can be no justice in international communications unless and until rights in this field are redefined and applied on an extensive scale. Information must be understood as a social good and a cultural product, and not as a material commodity or merchandise. … Sociocultural considerations should prevail over individual, materialistic, and mercantile considerations.
>
> (Masmoudi 1979: 183)

The challenge represented by Third World countries led to extensive negotiations within the United Nations, with the United States (often but not always supported by its Western allies)[1] propounding the centrality of a 'free flow of information' which served the interests of US and transnational media corporations, and the Eastern bloc along with many Third World nations focusing on the protection of national sovereignty. The result was a compromise described by British journalist Rosemary Righter as 'a masterly exercise in squaring the circle' – the adoption in 1978 by the UNESCO General Conference of 'The Declaration of Fundamental Principles Concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War' (reprinted, *Journal of Communication*, 1979, 29(2): 190–191). The Declaration was replete with broad generalizations, endorsing 'the exercise of freedom of opinion, expression and information, recognized as an integral part of human rights and fundamental freedoms', as well as recognizing that 'it is necessary to correct the inequalities in the flow of information to and from developing countries, and between these countries'.

As vague as the Declaration was in its broad generalizations, it nevertheless represented a defeat for the Soviet bloc in the absence of proposed clauses stipulating that 'states are responsible for the activities in the international sphere of all mass media under their jurisdiction', or obliging media 'to make known the versions of facts presented by states'. Thus, as Righter noted, it would be 'difficult for any government to use the declaration as a pretext for muzzling the press, domestic or international' (1979: 193). The real victory, however, was achieved by the Third World, as the Declaration enshrined in an official international document the recognition of an imbalance in the international flow of

news and the endorsement of the Third World's 'aspirations … for the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order'.

A few months after the adoption of the Declaration the February 1979 Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policies in Asia and Oceania held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, adopted a resolution that connected the dots between the UNESCO Declaration and 'efforts to achieve a new international economic order'. The Kuala Lumpur Declaration reinforced the perspective of the non-aligned countries that had been skirted in the UNESCO compromise, specifying that

> the developing countries of our region are still suffering from a dependence upon colonial legacies which have resulted in imbalances in communication structures and information flows. … People and individuals have the right to acquire an objective picture of reality by means of accurate and comprehensive information through a diversity of sources and means of information available to them, as well as to express themselves through various means of culture and communication.
>
> (Quoted in Nordenstreng 1979)

In order to put flesh on the bare bones of the 1978 Declaration, UNESCO appointed a commission chaired by the former UN Commissioner for Namibia and Nobel and Lenin Peace Prize winner Sean McBride. The Commission included representatives of the First, Second and Third Worlds, among them Mustapha Masmoudi and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the Colombian Nobel laureate then living in political exile in Mexico. The McBride Commission completed its work at the end of 1979, and it was a major focus of the 1980 UNESCO General Conference in Belgrade. The Report offers a complex analysis of communication issues at the global, national, and even community levels, revealing many facets of the positions taken by the different and differing constituencies, without attempting – or achieving – an overall resolution. Thus, for example, US law professor Howard Anawalt could praise the Commission's 'position against government censorship [as] generally consistent with First Amendment interpretations', while noting that 'the position concerning concentration and commercialization presents a more complicated inquiry' (Anawalt 1981: 125). Especially worrying in this regard was Recommendation 58:

> Effective legal measures should be designed to: (a) limit the process of concentration and monopolization; (b) circumscribe the action of transnationals by requiring them to comply with specific criteria and conditions defined by national legislation and development policies; (c) reverse trends to reduce the number of decision-makers at a time when the media's public is growing larger and the impact of communication is increasing; (d) reduce the influence of advertising upon editorial policy and broadcast programming; (e) seek and improve models which would ensure greater independence

> and autonomy of the media concerning their management and editorial policy, whether these media are under private, public or government ownership.

The perspective of the McBride Report, despite its considerable accommodation to the views of its Western members, represented a new take on familiar issues. The Report recommended participation in media management by representatives of the public and citizens' groups, and encouraged forms of alternative communication: radical opposition, community or local media movements, and 'trade unions or other social groups with their particular communication networks' (169–170, cited in Singh and Gross 1981).

The McBride Report, and the Belgrade UNESCO Conference centered on it, were disturbing to the Western governments and media, whose views on press freedom were best captured by A. J. Liebling's famous quip, 'Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one' (1975: 32). Press coverage of the UNESCO deliberations in the West was skimpy and hostile. An analysis by the National News Council in New York – hardly a supporter of the Third World perspectives on press freedom and news flow – concluded that 'news analysis and feature stories concentrated almost exclusively on Western worries about the UNESCO initiative, with little presentation of opposing viewpoints' (Raskin 1981: 167). Even the leaders of the US delegation felt, in the words of Leonard Sussman, 'The coverage was unbalanced because many reports of the events at Belgrade emphasized the dire potentialities of press control as through they had already materialized' (quoted in Raskin 1981: 168). In fact, as former *New York Times* editor A. H. Raskin concluded, the US press was distorting the tenor of the conference. An AP story cited by Raskin (October 21) carried the lead: 'Communist and Third World members of UNESCO overrode Western objections and pushed through several proposals to break what they consider the West's dominance of global communications and international news distribution.' Raskin notes: 'by the afternoon the lead had been sharpened to read: "Communist and Third World nations used their majority in UNESCO to pass resolutions aimed at getting more control over international news reporting".

William Harley, one of the US delegates to the Conference, who made a lengthy statement that he viewed as generally supportive of UNESCO, described as 'astigmatic' the *International Herald Tribune* report of his statement as 'an attack on UNESCO officials and the opening gun in a prospective confrontation between the West and a coalition of Communist and Third World countries' (Raskin 1981: 168).[2]

The stage was set for the next act, which opened with the inauguration of Ronald Reagan in 1981. The Reagan Administration, pursuing a more fervent Cold War crusade against the Evil Empire of Communism, was unwilling to indulge in negotiation with the membership of UNESCO. In December 1983, US Secretary of State Shultz wrote to UNESCO Director-General M'Bow, formally notifying him of the US intention to withdraw from UNESCO at the end of 1984. As later elaborated in a State Department memorandum, the

United States considered that UNESCO had taken on an anti-Western tone and become unwilling to defend the ideals of free thought and free expression upon which it was founded. It continues to press for a so-called New World Information and Communications Order, which embodies elements threatening to a free press and a free market. In particular, it is a way for governments to define 'responsible' reporting and control what is written about their nations and in their nations[3] (Correspondence and Memorandum reprinted in *Journal of Communication*, 1984, 34(4): 82–92).

Act two: the new world order meets the new technology

On March 6, 1991, President George Bush *père* addressed a joint session of the US Congress in the full flush of 'victory' in the Gulf War.[4] In this heady era following the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the swift defeat of Iraq (making the world safe for the free flow of oil), Bush pronounced the arrival of a new world order:

> Tonight I come to this House to speak about the world – the world after war. … Now, we can see a new world coming into view. A world in which there is the very real prospect of a new world order. In the words of Winston Churchill, a 'world order' in which 'the principles of justice and fair play … protect the weak against the strong …'. A world where the United Nations, freed from cold war stalemate, is poised to fulfill the historic vision of its founders. A world in which freedom and respect for human rights find a home among all nations.

Of course, what was being celebrated was the advent of a new international playing field, on which the triangular interplay of the First, Second, and Third Worlds, with its inherently unstable shifting coalitions, checks, and balances, had been replaced by the unequal matching of North vs. South, or, it often seemed, the West vs. the rest. In the free market triumphalism of this new world order the mantra most often recited is globalization, which generally translates into the absorption of Third World countries into a Western-dominated market system. These countries provide cheap labor and growing markets for Western/Northern corporate interests. Freed from the chains of ideological struggle, it would seem, capital flows freely across borders, seeking profit maximization and enlisting local governments, corporations, many 'development' NGOs, and other elites as allies in the quest. Enforced by the international quasi-governmental institutions – the IMF, World Bank, WTO, etc. – the power of capital reigns relatively unchecked. Within the First World strongholds of capitalism the undermining of welfare state structures by both 'conservative' (Thatcher, Reagan) and 'liberal' (Clinton, Blair) administrations reveals the ascendancy of free market fundamentalism.[5]

In this new world order the flow of information and entertainment remains very much unidirectional, from the 'center' to the 'periphery' or from the West

to the rest. The dominance of Western film studios around the world is well documented, even with the significant competition they receive from Bollywood and Hong Kong; and similar disparities can be found in popular music.

It is not only that American media products are so prevalent in other parts of the world, but also that – rhetoric of 'free flow' aside – American markets are so singularly impervious to outsiders. Americans are not very interested in foreign entertainment (with the notable exception of British pop singers), and hardly more interested in news from abroad, outside of occasional wars or crises.[6]

As the sun rose on a new century, it appeared that the battles over international communication patterns were over, and the free press of the capitalist West could flow freely across borders. Lions were lying down with lambs, or at any rate, Rupert Murdoch was negotiating with China over their lucrative satellite market. Enforced deregulation of media and information industries had opened the floodgates to a vast wave of consolidation in the hands of an ever-smaller number of Northern-based companies, and while the South might grumble at the unchecked power of the North as expressed by the dictates of the IMF and the WTO, in the end they would have little choice.

The edifice of this new world order began to reveal cracks, however, as it came under attack not only from positions on the periphery, but also from both right and left in the heart of the center itself. The old-fashioned social conservatives of the US right wing saw in the emerging new world order the threat of a capitalist international that was unmoved by appeals to nationalism or 'traditional American values' when they stood in the path of profit. The passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) enraged these conservatives, who began to sound like leftists in their criticisms of the 'Republicrat' coalition that serves international corporate interests. Here is Phyllis Schlafley in 1996, tying the pieces together:

> 'New World Order' has become a handy label to describe the various policies that challenge American sovereignty in the economic, political, diplomatic, and even educational venues. It's the underlying ideology behind trade policies that export American jobs and encourage illegal political contributions from foreigners. It's even the philosophy behind the trendy fads in public schools, such as multiculturalism, school-to-work, and global education. …
>
> 'Free trade' has become the mantra of a strange-bedfellow coalition of old-right libertarians, Silicon Valley's nouveau riche supporting Clinton, multinational corporations riding the bulls in the stock market, politicians of both parties who receive contributions from the above, and those who are making such big money in faraway places like Indonesia and Korea that they can write checks for $200,000 and $400,000 to the Democratic National Committee. The advocates of free trade constantly try to paint themselves as 'conservatives' who support less government and more free

> market; and they describe their opponents as favoring more government regulation. But that's false.
>
> (http://www.eagleforum.org/psr/1996/nov96/psrnov96.html, accessed February 2002)

Still, however hostile many on the right might be to the rhetoric or the policies of global capitalism, their complaints have done little to slow its progress. The critique from the left has been more unruly, but it remains to be seen whether it can be more effective. Gaining worldwide visibility with the tumultuous demonstrations in the streets of Seattle at the 1999 WTO meetings, and continuing ever since at successive gatherings of international economic organizations, a loose coalition of anarchist, environmental, labor, peace, feminist, socialist, and other social justice activists has registered its opposition to global capitalism and a will to construct workable alternatives.

The media have framed this movement for another globalization as nihilistic play by 'spoiled rich kids' or 'globetrotting tourist-activists', and when they do cover it, broadcast only the anti-'globocorp' demonstrations, predictably favoring images of 'black bloc' anarchists fighting with phalanxes of helmeted police through clouds of tear gas (the dramatic highlight of these street engagements was the killing of a young anarchist in the streets of Genoa by the Italian Carabinieri). Also predictably, news accounts have generally focused more on the 'success' of the police in keeping things under control than on the demands of the protestors. Still, representatives from Southern countries and from human rights organizations have repeatedly remarked that the recent wave of mobilization in the North has provided much needed pressure, helping them place concerns about the impact of unfettered corporate globalization onto the agenda at multilateral meetings (see Brecher *et al.* 2000). At the same time, these demonstrations served as spurs to the further development of alternative channels of communication made possible by the new technologies of the Internet and digital cameras and recorders. The Independent Media Center created by media activists to provide 'street-level' coverage of the Seattle WTO protests in November 1999 gave birth to a worldwide network of over 115 IndyMedia grassroots web sites based in cities across the United States and in more than forty-five countries around the globe (http://www.indymedia.org).[7]

The www.indymedia.org newswire works on the principle of 'open publishing', an essential element of the Indymedia project that allows independent journalists and publications to publish the news they gather instantaneously on a globally accessible web site. The Indymedia newswire encourages people to become the media by posting their own articles, analysis, and information to the site. Anyone may publish to the newswire, from any computer that is connected to the Internet, by clicking the 'publish' link on the www.indymedia.org page and following the easy instructions. Indymedia relies on the people who post to the Indymedia newswire to present their information in a thorough, honest, accurate manner.

The rapid spread of the Indymedia network parallels and is part of the

ongoing adoption of IT by social movements across the globe, from North and South and from all sides of the political spectrum, that has been taking place for almost two decades. An earlier radical Internet-based organization that predates the rise of the World Wide Web, the Institute for Global Communication (IGC), served as the communications hub for hundreds of national and grassroots organizations by maintaining Usenet groups and ftp sites for networks such as PeaceNet, EcoNet, and GreenNet as early as the mid-1980s (Ford and Geneve 2001). The Zapatista movement for indigenous rights, rising in the early 1990s in Chiapas, Mexico, against NAFTA policies that extended the penetration of free trade fundamentalism towards the South, was extremely effective at using email and net communications to generate international attention and force negotiations in place of the Mexican government's preferred solution – massive military 'counterinsurgency' action (see Keck and Sikkink 1998, Kumar 2000). The Net has been used extensively by environmental movements, immigrants rights movements (see www.noborder.org), and the free Burma movement (Troester 2001). Social movements have also used the Internet not only to spread and channel information, coordinate and report on mobilizations, and petition political and corporate bodies, but also in some cases to disrupt government, corporate, or countermovement information infrastructures (see Costanza-Chock, forthcoming). Far more widespread than electronic disruption, though, has been the use of the Net by social movement organizations, networks, and unaffiliated but critical-minded individuals to spread information not carried by mainstream media via web sites, bulletin boards, open publishing newswires, chat rooms, and email.

The power of these new forms of electronic samizdat was dramatized once more in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. In the period immediately following the attacks web traffic increased in general, with mainstream sites such as those of CNN and the BBC experiencing unprecedented volumes of hits. CNN.com, which had been receiving around 14 million 'page impressions' per day, was registering more than 9 million per hour; the BBC was receiving 2000 'requests' per second to access the site, compared to 200 hits per second previously (Gibson 2001). A Harris poll in the United States, released in early October, revealed a doubling in the number of citizens reporting using the Internet at their primary source of news, from about 3 percent to 8 percent (Featherly 2001). Important to this discussion is the fact that it was not just mainstream news sites that experienced increased activity; similar traffic jumps occurred at grassroots alternative media sites that provided non-mainstream news, information, and analysis. For example, the leftist news site Alternet witnessed an increase from an average of 6000 daily visitors to peaks of 30,000 on September 11, and again on the day the United States began bombing Afghanistan; the traffic has since settled down to a steady 20,000 a day – more than three times the pre-September 11 rate (http://www.alternet.org/index.html). Other left/alternative sites saw the same pattern: Indymedia reported huge spikes of activity on September 11, followed by average traffic levels twice the previous amount (personal communication), as

did Zmag.org (the web site of *Z Magazine*) and media watchdogs Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR).

Beyond the vast rise in visits to news web sites, whether mainstream or alternative, there was also a widespread recourse to the Internet through email, list-serves, chat rooms, and bulletin boards. According to a poll by the Pew Internet & American Life Project, nearly three-quarters of US Internet users have used email in some way related to the events of September 11, and a third of Internet users have read or posted materials in chat rooms, bulletin boards, or other online forums (Rainie 2001). Of course, the majority of this activity was not electronic samizdat but, rather, the replication of absurdly reductionist frames of analysis provided by the dominant media apparatus.[8]

Those who recall the persistent drumbeat of 'press freedom vs. state control' that punctuated the Cold War era debates over international news flow must have been amused by the performance of the US news media in the aftermath of September 11. It is difficult to choose among the candidates for most outrageous or revealing comments by leading American journalists. Strong contenders, identified by FAIR (http://www.fair.org/media-beat/011213.html (accessed June 2002)) include:

- CBS anchor Dan Rather. On September 17's David Letterman show Rather proclaimed: 'George Bush is the president, he makes the decisions.' Speaking as 'one American', the newsman added: 'Wherever he wants me to line up, just tell me where. And he'll make the call.'[9]
- Cokie Roberts of ABC News. Also on David Letterman's show, in October, Roberts gushed: 'I am, I will just confess to you, a total sucker for the guys who stand up with all the ribbons on and stuff, and they say it's true and I'm ready to believe it. We had General Shelton on the show the last day he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and I couldn't lift that jacket with all the ribbons and medals. And so when they say stuff, I tend to believe it.'

Beyond the ill-considered, if revealing, remarks by journalists, there were even more troubling indications that US media were rallying around the flag. 'It seems perverse to focus too much on the casualties or hardship in Afghanistan,' said CNN Chair Walter Isaacson in a memo ordering his staff to accompany any images of Afghan civilian suffering with rhetoric emphasizing that US bombing was a retaliation for the Taliban harboring terrorists. 'You want to make sure that when they see civilian suffering there, it's in the context of a terrorist attack that caused enormous suffering in the United States' (Kurtz 2001). Alternatively, according to *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, 'collateral damage' might actually be a blessing: 'It turns out many of those Afghan "civilians" were praying for another dose of B-52's to liberate them from the Taliban, casualties or not' (November 23, 2001). It therefore came as no surprise when, for example, UN reports of a massacre of dozens of civilian villagers by US helicopter gunships sank quickly with only minimal mention in mainstream press, as did the release of a tally of civilian casualties by University

of New Hampshire professor Marc W. Herold that documented more than 3500 Afghan civilian deaths – greater than the number of civilians killed on September 11 (Herold 2001).

When Amnesty International demanded 'an immediate and full investigation into what may have been violations of international and humanitarian law such as direct attacks on civilian objects or indiscriminate attacks' by the US military (press release, October 26, 2001), the story was not reported by ABC, CBS, or NBC. ABC News was more interested in another human rights report released January 16, 2002:

> The international human rights group Human Rights Watch has released its annual report, and it says that several countries are using the U.S.-led war against terrorism as a justification to ignore human rights. Human Rights Watch says that Russia, Egypt, Israel, China, Zimbabwe, Malaysia and Uzbekistan have all cracked down on domestic opponents in the name of terrorism.

However, as noted by FAIR, one country singled out for criticism by Human Rights Watch was conspicuously absent from ABC's report: the United States, where anti-terrorism measures, including the detention of hundreds of immigrants for undeclared charges, in undisclosed locations and without access to legal advice, as well as suggestions that torturing suspects would be an acceptable method of information gathering, were described in the group's press release as 'threatening long-held human rights principles'. In the words of the *Guardian* (17 January 2002) in the UK, 'dictators "need do nothing more than photocopy" measures introduced by the Bush administration, whose ability to criticize abuses in other countries was thus deeply compromised'.

The US government, apparently unsatisfied by the abundant evidence of journalistic compliance, has engaged in consistent efforts to further manage the news (see accounts at http://www.iacenter.org/). Direct government interventions of particular note include: the $1.91 million purchase, on the day US bombing began, of all rights to commercial satellite images of Afghanistan (Lumpkin 2001); the successful appeal by national security advisor Condoleezza Rice that US news organizations not rebroadcast the taped messages from Osama bin Laden first shown on the Arab language cable channel Al-Jazeera (Madden 2001); and the November 13 bombing of Al-Jazeera's Kabul office on the verge of the Northern Alliance entrance into the city. The Pentagon later denied 'deliberately targeting' Al-Jazeera (Zednik 2002).

Since its founding in 1996 by Qatar's newly installed Sheik Hamad bin Kahlifa Al Thani as part of a modernizing effort, Al-Jazeera (the name translates as 'the peninsula' – referring to the small state jutting into the Persian Gulf off Saudi Arabia), has grown to a twenty-four-hour Arab language satellite broadcast service employing 500 in twenty-seven bureaus around the world. Initially staffed largely by BBC graduates, Al-Jazeera 'provides Arab news from an Arab perspective, with journalists who hail from Mauritania to Iraq – no single nation

dominates' (Zednik 2002). By providing news that was defined neither by Western news agencies nor, like all state-owned media in the Arab world, by government interests, Al-Jazeera rapidly attracted the attention and loyalty of audiences throughout the Arab world. Not surprisingly, Arab governments have not generally been happy with this programming, but they have not always been able to resist its popularity.

It was the events of 9/11, of course, that brought Al-Jazeera to the attention of the non-Arab world. As the only foreign news agency permitted in Kabul by the Taliban, Al-Jazeera had a relative monopoly on news the rest of the world wanted, and its access to interviews and speeches by Osama bin Laden made them a household name around the world. Realizing the need to accommodate the new reality of news originating from an alien perspective, Western leaders Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld, Condoleezza Rice, and Tony Blair all made themselves available for interviews by Al-Jazeera.

The presence of Al-Jazeera on the international media scene has been influential in arousing Arabic solidarity with the Palestinian cause through its non-stop coverage of the ongoing Intifada. Al-Jazeera's coverage provides a pro-Palestinian perspective that counters the consistently pro-Israeli perspective of Western agencies such as CNN – for example, including commentary from Hamas leaders who would never be treated as legitimate spokespersons by Western media:

> Even some of the region's more authoritarian leaders have appeared largely powerless to turn down the volume … state-controlled networks must either follow suit or risk losing viewers. … Like some other Arab stations, [the state-owned Syrian Satellite] network and the government-controlled Channel Two have steadily cut back their entertainment programming since the Israeli offensive began … replacing variety shows and sporting events with political programs and news.
>
> (Golden 2002)

US government propaganda efforts have focused on entertainment as well as news media. In October 2001 a meeting was held between network heads and studio chiefs in Hollywood and members of the Bush Administration at which the executives

> committed themselves to new initiatives in support of the war on terrorism. These initiatives would stress efforts to enhance the perception of America around the world, to 'get out the message' on the fight against terrorism and to mobilize existing resources, such as satellites and cable, to foster better global understanding.
>
> (Bart 2001)

Prominent among the potential partners of such a venture is the worldwide entertainment channel MTV. MTV has been successfully expanding in India

and other parts of Asia, and the US government campaign fits well with MTV's plans for international interactive programming:

> Rushing to shift perceptions of the U.S. in the Islamic world, Washington and Hollywood are now brainstorming about how the entertainment biz might help convey a wider – and more positive – range of perceptions about America. And no demo is more crucial to the future of Islamic-Western relations than the 15–30 age group. That's where MTV comes in.
>
> (McClintock 2001)[10]

As we have described above, however, in the Internet age it has become considerably more difficult to manage the flow of information within and across borders, despite media industry compliance with outright attempts by the state to control wartime information flow. In the post-9/11 US climate of crackdown on dissent, as in other (more and less) repressive circumstances around the world, grassroots alternative organizations and countless individuals sitting at their computers have continued to spread suppressed information and critical opinion via email samizdat. Among the notable examples:

- In early October 2001 a 1998 interview with President Jimmy Carter's national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski conducted by the French paper *Le Nouvel Observateur* (January 15–21, 1998) added an interesting footnote to official accounts of the Afghanistan situation. Brzezinski claimed that the United States helped draw the Soviets into their disastrous 1980 invasion by secretly funding opponents of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. Asked if he regretted the US action, Brzezinski replied, 'Regret what? That secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap and you want me to regret it? The day that the Soviets officially crossed the border, I wrote to President Carter: We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam war. Indeed, for almost 10 years, Moscow had to carry on a war unsupportable by the government, a conflict that brought about the demoralization and finally the breakup of the Soviet empire.' The interview was widely forwarded via email and posted to alternative sites. (A Google search for the article finds about 1000 hits.)
- Indian writer Arundhati Roy's essay, 'The algebra of infinite justice', was published in the *Guardian* in the UK but refused by US papers including the *New York Times*, which has previously published Ms Roy. However, just as the Brzezinski interview, the article spread quickly and widely through web sites and email. A Lexis-Nexis search reveals only one entry for the article – the original *Guardian* version – but a Google search turns up more than 2400 hits, indicating that it has been widely copied and posted to other sites and bulletin boards.
- The Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan [RAWA] was able to influence the international dialogue on the war through its web-

> posted information and opinion pieces. As noted in a *New York Times* article on the power of the Web as an organizing tool, a 21-year-old Iowa anti-war activist was able to draw upon RAWA information in her efforts to shift the debate over options: 'I say, "Look at what the women of Afghanistan are saying about the Northern Alliance" (Harmon 2001).

As the fighting in Afghanistan subsided, President Bush – perhaps having learned a lesson from his father's rapid postwar loss of popularity – made it clear that the war against terrorism was not over, and moved to transform the wartime temporary communications effort into an office of global diplomacy as a permanent feature of national security policy (Becker and Dao 2002).[11] More striking, however, was the creation of an Office of Strategic Influence in the Pentagon, whose director, General Simon Worden, proposed waging secret information warfare. Such secret operations have in the past included activities like spreading inaccurate or misleading information, invading computer networks, and broadcasting radio programs that simulate local news programs (Dao 2002). The *New York Times* editorialized that 'Such promiscuous blending of false and true can only undermine the credibility of all information coming out of the Pentagon and other parts of the government as well' (20 February, 2002). In response to widespread criticism, the government backtracked slightly, while still insisting on its need for 'a range of secret military information activities intended to deceive adversaries, including hiring outside firms that would be authorized to spread inaccurate or misleading information overseas' (Dao 2002).

The unveiling of such explicit efforts at managing the news presents an ironic counterpart to the posturing of the United States in the Cold War era debates over international news. Recall British journalist Rosemary Righter's account of the 1978 UNESCO Declaration on the Media, which cited a 'basic dichotomy between those who think of the media as vehicles for free debate and diverse sources of information, and those who think of them as tools of state policy' (Righter 1979: 192). In Righter's account it was the Soviets who held the latter view, and the West that repudiated the concept of state control of the media and supported the principles of a free press. Veterans of those countless conferences, negotiations, and compromises might well be amused, though probably not surprised.

Epilogue: back to the future?

In February 2002, as the elite of international capitalism met at the World Economic Forum, moved from Davos to New York in a post-9/11 act of solidarity, some 60,000 participants gathered in Porto Alegre, Brazil, for the second World Social Forum. The curtain has risen, it seems, on another act in a North–South drama that promises – or threatens – to alter the terms of international political debate. One of the central foci of the World Social Forum was the Seminar on Communication and Citizenship: Social Appropriation and Control of Information and Communication Technologies, which concluded:

'Communication is a key factor in the globalization process. Whoever controls information, knowledge and the technical infrastructure that carries them has a strong grip on economic, social, cultural and political development. It is therefore a fundamental area of social struggle.' Against the backdrop of neo-liberal triumphalism, the hyperconsolidation of media industries, and Bush the Younger's Infinite War, the Seminar set forth an agenda of priorities that is simultaneously reminiscent of the UNESCO era manifestos and reflective of new political alignments and communication technologies:

- Dismantle the monopolistic concentration of media and communication systems, including software and content (legislative, regulatory measures; boycott campaigns, etc.).
- Promote information as a worldwide common good, in particular opposing current policy on intellectual property rights that protects profit over knowledge sharing.
- Defend the airwaves from privatization, as part of the global commons.
- Defend civil liberties and privacy from invasive use of technology for surveillance and control and against regressive legislation that threatens freedom of expression and association.
- Encourage and create media content that respects pluralism and diversity of expression, and balance in terms of gender, culture, language, and geographic region.
- Provide access and training to promote the creative use of interactive technologies, to ensure that ICTs are not a new source of social fragmentation.
- Develop a solidarity-based economy in the ICT sector.

With heightened momentum coming out of the WSF, a rich variety of NGOs, public broadcasters, community media organizations, social movement organizations, and other groups launched the 'Campaign for Communication Rights in the Information Society' (CRIS) to ensure that this agenda would be well represented at the upcoming two-part World Summit on the Information Society. The WSIS, to be held in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005, is organized by the United Nations and run by the International Telecommunications Union and will be a forum meant to 'develop a common vision and understanding of the information society … and to draw up a strategic plan of action for adapting to this new society'. Government, industry, and civil society are all meant to have a place at the table, and groups spearheaded by CRIS hope to leverage the WSIS as an international platform from which to broaden public debate and reframe communication as a human right (for details, see: http://www.comunica.org/cris/). They will do battle against industry captains who will push instead to dismantle any remaining barriers to worldwide media industry consolidation and market penetration, as well as to advance intellectual property laws designed (ironically enough coming from proponents of 'free flow') to crack down hard on the explosion of 'unauthorized' replication and distribution of texts, images, and sounds made possible by digital media. This crackdown, visible in the United

States under the guise of the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act, gravely threatens current notions of 'fair use' (including incorporation or reinterpretation of existing works for artistic, educational, and even personal purposes) and further advances the interests of the corporate infosector (see Halpern 2001).

British journalist Naomi Klein captured the remarkable flavor of the emerging global social justice movement that has pushed communication to center stage, both in demands for communication as a right and in its methods of mobilization:

> For me, the crystallizing moment came late one night at the youth campsite in Porto Alegre. Around a thousand young people were gathered in front of a loudspeaker. It was broadcasting live news from the street demonstrations in New York outside the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. The news was coming from an Indy Media Centre reporter who was on her cellphone in the crowd. Her voice was being streamed live on the Internet. It was picked up by a micro radio station set up in the camp, where her words were translated into Portuguese and then broadcast. At one point the U.S. server went down and was immediately replaced by a backup in Italy.
>
> (Klein 2002)

> Still, history and experience counsel caution as well as optimism. In 1988 one of us concluded an essay on 'image ethics' on a note of pessimism, noting that 'history offers too many precedents of new technologies which did not live up to their advance billing; which ended up being part of the problem rather than part of the solution. … There surely are opportunities in the new communications order for more equitable and morally justifiable structures and practices, but I am not sure we can get there from here'.

As Kafka once wrote in his notebooks, 'In the fight between you and the world, bet on the world' (Gross 1988: 201). It remains to be seen whether living in the digital age has improved our odds.

Postscript: Operation Enduring Struggle

This chapter was originally written in June 2002. Not surprisingly, events since then have overtaken our observations on the global struggle for information control, the consolidation of US media hegemony, and the growth of electronic samizdat. We hope that critical communications scholars will carefully investigate the depths of complicity to which US corporate media sank in their coverage of so-called 'Operation Iraqi Freedom', the heights of infamy attained by the Pentagon in its attempts to control information flow during the invasion, and the vast disparity between the coverage produced by the US corporate news machinery and that of nearly every other press system. There is also important work to be done in describing and analyzing the rise of the Internet as an important means for the left in the United States and around the globe to access

alternative perspectives and to mobilize resistance to the war and the new wave of United States imperialism. None of this can be done in depth here, but it is worth noting that – unsurprisingly – the trends we discussed above still hold true for the most part, and will for the foreseeable future.

US-based media firms still overwhelmingly dominate the global information landscape; these firms continued to play the part of war cheerleaders before, during, and after the invasion of Iraq, just as they did before, during, and after the bombing of Afghanistan. The corporate media conglomerates will most likely gain even more power in the United States if, as seems likely, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), chaired by Michael Powell (son of Colin Powell), eliminates the last regulations against corporate media monopoly in June 2003. These conglomerates are also lobbying hard to increase their leverage worldwide by bringing audio-visual content into the trade regimes of the WTO during the September 2003 Cancun Ministerial. If successful, this will allow the United States to level economic sanctions on any country that fails to 'liberalize' audio-visual markets, which will mean the end of nationally subsidized news, film, and other cultural industries, the elimination of quotas that control the ratio of foreign to local content, and a new wave of media consolidation worldwide in the hands of the giant multinational conglomerates. It will be, in effect, the final nail in the coffin of the NWICO debate. In light of these maneuvers at the WTO, combined with the further erosion of the United Nations' power, the World Summit on the Information Society appears at best to be a toothless vehicle where civil society may succeed in getting a head nod towards the inclusion of gender, youth, and indigenous needs in IT access initiatives. At worst, it is another stepping stone in the neo-liberal agenda of privatization of all information and communications systems, cloaked in the language of public–private partnerships.

The Pentagon has continued to exercise tight control over the media. One notable new strategy was the practice of 'embedded' reporters, who literally slept, ate, traveled (and one can only speculate …) with US troops in Iraq. This brilliant media tactic transformed the war coverage into a montage of cuts between, on the one hand, the now-familiar high-tech lightshow of so-called 'precision munitions' and 'surgical strikes', or orbs of light in the night sky over Baghdad, and on the other hand the low-grade reality TV of reports from the midst of unspecified troop locations. Notably absent from US coverage were images of the impact of war on the Iraqi people, or attempts to challenge the Pentagon's tactics, aims, or plans for exit. The multi-million-dollar CentCom stage served as the theater for daily doses of manipulation, misinformation, and bald lies faithfully reported by the US networks as gospel. The BBC, to its credit, issued a directive that no reports from CentCom would be published as news without attribution (Byrne 2003).

Also notable, along with the bombing of Al-Jazeera's Kabul office in Afghanistan, was US military targeting of independent and foreign journalists. This included the bombing of Al-Jazeera's Baghdad office that killed correspondent Tareq Ayoub and the attack on the Palestine Hotel that killed Reuters'

Taras Protsyuk and Telecino's Jose Couso (Reporters Without Borders 2003). Besides those attacked with military force, many journalists who left their embedded positions, refused to participate in the embedded system, or participated but filed critical reports were sent packing – for example, Peter Arnett (Associated Press 2003). Reporters who failed to toe the line were refused entrance or passed over systematically for questions both at CentCom and at White House press briefings (Wolff 2003), while others who dared to voice criticism faced boycotts (the Dixie Chicks) or lost their jobs (GE/NBC's Phil Donahue).

At the same time, the Internet remains a key enabler of the global justice movement. All the web sites we described as sources of electronic samizdat continued to play that role, and all again experienced large increases in numbers of users. This reflected a more widespread growth in the numbers of people in the United States using the Internet as their primary news source for information about the war: 17% of Internet users, as opposed to just 3% for 9/11. However, although more people in the United States than ever before went to foreign and alternative news sites, this was still only 10% and 8% of Internet users, respectively. In comparison, 32% used the Net to seek information from US TV network sites, 29% from US newspaper sites, and 15% from government sites. Still, more than half of Internet users reported seeking points of view different from government sources (Rainie 2003). More people than ever before wrote, posted, forwarded, and spread articles and emails critical of US unilateralism and the drive to empire. Most dramatically, the Internet was used as an organizing tool and logistical apparatus for a massive wave of protest actions on a scale unseen since the late 1960s, including the largest coordinated worldwide mobilization in human history: millions of people, in every major city in the world, on all continents, participated in the February 15 day of action against the war (Barr 2003).

Yet, despite unprecedented action, in part enabled by new communication technologies, the war hawks had their way. It remains to be seen whether the activist networks that have emerged around the war will be able to transform widespread dissent and greater capacity for networked communication into political victories. One key test whose outcome will have deep repercussions will be the fight to remove the unelected Bush the Younger from his squat of the White House in 2004. Another will be the struggle in the WTO over the forced privatization of media systems across the globe.

Notes

1 Some Western countries, especially France and Canada, had policies that attempted to limit US information dominance by mandating a balance of airtime between foreign media and locally produced content. See Roach (1997) for an analysis of how, during the NWICO debates, these nations moved away from critiques that sounded much like the 'cultural imperialism' argument and adopted a pragmatic stance in line with 'free flow in hopes of gaining a piece of the action in developing world information markets'.

2 The editor-in-chief of UPI responded to complaints about the one-sidedness of Western reporting of the UNESCO debate to the 'necessity for choice editors must make every day on which they will use of the thousands of stories that cascade into their newsrooms' (Raskin 1981: 172). One story that ended up on the cutting room floor was the UPI's UN correspondent's December 1980 account of the approval by the UN General Assembly of a consensus statement endorsing the McBride Report and the UNESCO initiative for a new world information order. The story went largely unreported in the US press, possibly, in the opinion of the UPI editor, because the murder of John Lennon around the same time so dominated news attention.

3 As Joseph Mehan, American journalist and Chief of Public Information for UNESCO, pointed out, US Congressional Reports of the same period reached different conclusions: 'The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is not, at this time, implementing any policy or procedure the effect of which is to license journalists or their publications, to censor or otherwise restrict the free flow of information within or among countries, or to impose mandatory codes of journalistic practice or ethics. Therefore, the Department perceives no grounds for withholding funding from the Organization under the terms of Sections 109 (a) and (b) of the Department of State Authorization Act (1982–1983)' (quoted in Mehan 1984).

4 There has been much in-depth discussion of the careful control over information exercised by the US government during this war. See Paul Virilio on the virtualization of war (1998), Jean Baudrillard's polemic assertion that the Gulf War may as well have been a complete fabrication (1995), James der Derian on the rise of the military–industrial–media–entertainment complex (2001), and in this volume Peter van der Veer.

5 Not everyone was satisfied, however. American anti-feminist crusader Phyllis Schlafley headlined an edition of her Phyllis Schlafley Report: 'The New World Order Wants Your Children', as she warned her readers that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, passed unanimously by the General Assembly in November 1989, would 'diminish the status of existing American rights', in part by giving 'the child the right to express his own views freely in all matters, to receive information of all kinds through "media of the child's choice," to freedom of religion, to be protected from interference with his correspondence, to have access to information from national and international sources in the media, to "use his own language," and to the right to "rest and leisure".' As Mrs. Schlafley queries, 'Does this mean that a child can assert his right to say anything he wants to his parents at the dinner table?' You can see the danger of world government here, and the threat of black helicopters descending on the nation's dinner tables (http://www.eagleforum.org/psr/1993/mar93/psrmar93.html (accessed January 2002)).

6 The same phenomenon can be found in the less visible precincts of scholarly publishing. Colin Day, Publisher of the Hong Kong University Press, recently noted that many American publishers send manuscripts to be printed in China and then shipped back to the United States – a familiar example of cost-saving globalization. However, these same presses are not welcoming of manuscripts from outside the United States. 'If the author is referring to non-American phenomena, he or she will be asked to provide additional explanation, so the American reader will be able to grasp the points being made. In brief, a manuscript from the Periphery will be put through a rigorous American and Americanizing filter' (Day 2002). Day quotes Taiwanese scholar Chen Kwan-hsing, who views this pattern as a way of 'reproducing the existing power structure of global capitalism and the political nation-states'.

7 For further discussion of the use of the Internet during the Seattle mobilization see Smith (2001) or Eagleton-Pierce (2001), among others. It is beyond the scope of this

article to interrogate the ways in which the attacks on September 11 represent (or are motivated by) a critique of US-led corporate globalization that overlaps, intersects, and at the same time radically diverges from that articulated by anti-corporate activists on either the left or the right within the United States. Some Islamic critiques (which are multiple in terms of both content and tactics, although it seems to be forgotten lately with mainstream press and academic writing not only reifying 'radical Islam' but even conflating all Islam with 'radical fundamentalist Islam') do share a rejection of market epistemology with far-left anti-corporate activists. Predictably, this has been used in combination with a 'terrorism master frame' to force the left against the wall and fend off accusations of complicity with terror.

8 In fact, users of AOL who attempted to take advantage of Internet samizdat by subscribing to the zmag listserv, which regularly published articles critical of the war consensus, found that zmag was blocked from sending to AOL accounts for several weeks (see www.zmag.org/ZNET).

9 In an interesting coda, Rather has more recently criticized what he described as intense pressure on journalists to conform with the official line during the build-up to and implementation of the bombing of Afghanstan (Engel 2002).

10 In February 2002 US Secretary of State Colin Powell participated in an hour-long satellite-based press conference with young people around the world. As the *New York Times* noted, 'the State Department had a serious purpose in accepting the invitation: MTV reaches 375 million homes in 164 countries, including many where Washington is trying to combat anti-American militancy'. When Ida Norheim-Hagtun, 19, of Norway, asked about the United States being seen as Satan, Secretary Powell said that, 'far from being the great Satan, I would say we are the great protector' (Purdom 2002).

11 And perhaps even fearing a return to pre-9/11 criticisms of illegitimacy based on his loss of the popular vote, massive denial of black voter rights in the state of Florida, inclusion of military absentee ballots mailed after the deadline, and so on.

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4 Television in the United States from 9/11 and the US's continuing 'War on Terror'

Single theme, multiple media lenses

Shoma Munshi

Introduction

The aim of my chapter is to analyze the role of the US corporate news media, especially television, in the nature of their coverage, presentation, and (re)presentation of the terrorist attacks of September 11 as 'news happened', its aftermath, and the US's so-called continuing 'War on Terror' with the two wars already fought in Afghanistan and Iraq. I argue that in a highly media-saturated environment such as the one we live in today, successful political and administrative agendas depend a great deal on how well they are packaged and presented in the media. This chapter tracks how 9/11 and its aftermath with the US's continuing 'War on Terror' are leading examples of such media packaging and presentation of government and military policy and agendas (cf. Kellner 2003b).

In examining discussions around televisual images that have both immediate and lasting visible impact, I also refer to the print media and, very importantly, the Internet. In the new age of electronic communication with its simultaneity of transmission, a large part of the events of 9/11 and its aftermath were told through television images, most of which emanated from news channels in the United States. But it is exactly because of the dangers that this poses that discussions of contemporary image culture need to be located within larger social and political discourses and historical perspective. It becomes doubly important

> to discriminate between a liberating and incarcerating use of images, between those that disclose and those that close off our relation to the other, those that democratise culture and those that mystify it, those that communicate and those that manipulate
>
> (Kearney 1988: 390, cited in Robins 1996: 7)

This chapter has been largely an ethnographic process from tracking US and foreign television news channels (literally) from the moment that September 11 'happened', as well as reading newspapers and regularly following discussions on the Internet. I attempt to analyze the manner of disseminating 'breaking news' as events 'happened' in the United States itself as well as war coverage in 'real time' during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the interplay of different orders

of images, and their interpretations within a specific social space. Furthermore, I examine how images and interpretations of news themselves are essentially polysemic and ambivalent and exist in the double-sided sense of both representation and misrepresentation (cf. Sharratt 1989, Robins 1996).

Framing 'News As It Happens': 9/11

The events of September 11 and the days and weeks that followed present the news media – in particular the electronic media – with unprecedented challenges. BBC media correspondent Nick Higham, writing on September 25, 2001, observed that

> for many journalists, the attack on the U.S. is the biggest story they will ever cover. Little wonder then that the news media on either side of the Atlantic have been full of little else but the attacks on America and their aftermath for the past two weeks.
>
> (BBC Online)

ABC television channel program *Nightline*'s executive producer, Tom Bettag, is reported to have remarked 'this story is bigger than almost any breaking story we have dealt with. … Journalists … don't like surprises. This was like the Kennedy assassination and the Challenger explosion. We were unprepared, shaken that we were unprepared' (cited in Schmuhl 2001–02 online).

Having arrived in the United States barely two weeks prior to 9/11, I saw the attack on the World Trade Center (WTC) towers on the television screens of the bank where I was in the process of opening a new account. In the first uncertain moments, everyone thought that a terrible accident had occurred as a passenger jet had somehow flown off course and crashed into the North Tower. And then, minutes later, uncertainty turned into certainty as the second airliner hit the South Tower and the shock was palpable. By this time, CNN and other television news channels had already arrived on the spot and millions of spectators across the world watched the second crash live on television. The news of the attack on the Pentagon followed, then the crash in Pennsylvania – telephone lines, email, and the Internet were jammed. It was to be several hours before my family could reach me on the telephone from India. It took me two days of telephoning from Philadelphia to New York and Washington to find out if my friends were safe.

The unthinkable had happened – the United States had been attacked on its own soil. On television, the day of September 11 was taken over by repeated images of the two planes crashing into the twin towers of the WTC, followed by their collapse into rubble as New York City's skyline was changed for ever. These images were interspersed with footages of a third plane crashing into a wing of the Pentagon and the fourth diverted airliner crashing in Pennsylvania. The byline 'Attack on America' appeared on the bottom of television screens against a fuzzy, floating backdrop of the Stars and Stripes. In many cases, the visual spectacle of the plane crashes were used repeatedly by the television networks,

not just on the full screen, but also in the bottom corner of TV screens as interviews and other reporting went on. Some networks showed images of victims jumping out of the WTC towers – compounded by the Wednesday edition of newspapers like *The New York Times*, and tabloids like the *New York Post* and *New York Daily News*, carrying full-page color photos of victims falling from the top of the towers. Reporters at the Newsworld conference of television executives in Barcelona in November 2001 retrospectively expressed their concerns about the repetitive use of catastrophic images on American television and questioned the appropriateness of the materials used. Stephen Evans, a BBC correspondent who covered the WTC attacks first-hand, went so far as to say, 'As a viewer, and as someone on the ground in New York, I found the hourly repetition of images pornographic' (*Guardian* 2001). Stephen Claypole, founder of the news agency APTN, expressed his concern at the use of images by US broadcasters as a 'promotional tool' (ibid.).

The media simultaneously also showcased the human tragedy and drama related to the attacks. Newspapers and airwaves were filled with images of suffering and anecdotes of personal loss. American nationalism, religious devotion, and symbolism – all took over with extensive and extended coverage of flag waving and religious services. 'The Internet service provider America online [started urging] its members to "print out a copy of the flag and listen to patriotic tunes" and [ran] children's drawings of the World Trade Center on its home page' (Sen 2001).

Television anchors Dan Rather and Tom Brokaw could barely hide their tears during on-air interviews, Brokaw visibly shaking after an assistant contracted anthrax while handling a letter addressed to him. One CNN correspondent started crying while interviewing family members at Ground Zero. CNN anchor Aaron Brown cut in to add 'we are trained to be dispassionate, but we are not expected to be inhuman'. TV anchors and hosts of talk shows interviewed survivors of the attacks, replayed telephone calls made by those who died in the WTC and the ill-fated planes, and interviewed surviving family members and friends. As is evident, the 'confessional' genre of television was very much in evidence here. One can argue in defense of this genre, particularly in times of crisis (see, for instance, Livingstone and Lunt 1994). It provides a language, a way for people to work through stressful emotional issues. As Uricchio has argued, it is 'a way to humanize and make felt the abstraction of numbers. The banality … of some of the questions notwithstanding, this use of a broader televisual convention has helped the public feel the enormity of the loss caused by the attack' (2001 online). Furthermore, given the numbers of people who watch television, we would do well at this point to remember what Dayan and Katz (1992) argued about: in a situation where 'passive spectatorship gives way to ceremonial participation. The depth of this involvement, in turn, has relevance for the formation of public opinion and for institutions such as politics, religion and leisure. In a further step, they enter collective memory.'

> On September 11, for the first time in history, the vast vertical integration of America's mass media came out of hiding, as parent companies simulcast their news flagships across sister cable networks. CBS news coverage was carried on Viacom owned MTV and VH1. AOL-Time Warner broadcast CNN news coverage on TNT, TNN and Court TV. Even ESPN was taken over ABC News broadcasts. Wherever Americans turned on television, avoidance of news was virtually impossible.
>
> (Nisbet 2001)

In the first week following September 11, the news divisions of all the four leading broadcasters – ABC, NBC, CBS, and Fox – stayed on the air with an unprecedented four straight days of round-the-clock, commercial-free coverage of the attacks and their aftermath. Media reports, especially television coverage on Tuesday, September 11, and the few days that followed, were, I argue, deeply influenced by two factors: the *breaking nature* of the events; and the advantages as well as disadvantages of live television reporting – '*doing media' while reporting 'happening events*' which were difficult to fully comprehend even as reporters tried to provide a narrative coherence to them. Executives at the Barcelona convention admitted that 'the scale of the story on September 11 meant that they had sometimes struggled to find the correct tone' (*Guardian* 2001). The events themselves were such that they transcended typical norms that newscasters use in editing and framing production processes. Also, competitive pressures resulting from the proliferation of 24/7 news networks no doubt added to the problem. That said, the question of journalistic responsibility still remains.

At television networks, as the day of September 11 passed into evening, some journalistic conventions began to take hold. A framing of events started focusing narrowly on the reaction from high-profile leaders. Across the media, President George W. Bush was seen as 'facing his greatest test' as the media speculated about a visibly worried president and how he would handle this crisis. Conjectures started as to what he should do 'politically'. Initially, Bush's first responses were unfairly compared to those of New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani who had reached the scene of the WTC towers (later to be called Ground Zero) almost immediately, while Bush, at the time, was at the NORAD airbase. But as the president started to visibly take control and addressed the nation on television, declaring a 'war on terrorism', these concerns seemed to abate. Among news anchors, CBS's Dan Rather was one of the first to introduce the context of battle, calling the incidents 'the new face of war'. Jeff Greenfield of CNN compared the numbers of casualties at Pearl Harbor to the potential casualty counts in New York. As September 11 wore on, framing the events in the context of Pearl Harbor started gathering momentum, and the phrase 'day of infamy' was used liberally throughout the coverage. By the morning of Wednesday, September 12, headlines in the *New York Post* declared 'Act of War' and the *Daily News* declared 'It's War'.

Watching television in those first days after September 11, I was struck by

how much the initial coverage of events is crucial for setting the tone for what follows. As William Uricchio in the days following argued,

> the quick transformation of unpredictable live events into familiar narrative patterns … produces a certain comfort; but it also frames the event, establishing specific ways of thinking about the situation, together with an inclination towards narrative resolution. The framing of the story as an 'Attack on America' and the insistence upon almost exclusively domestic coverage was a choice. It precluded other sorts of framing such as 'an attack on the West' which might have appeared had we seen the spontaneous street demonstrations of shocked and saddened people in Berlin, Copenhagen, Paris, London, and other parts of the world. The 'world' part of the WTC accounted for over 1000 now missing 'foreigners', and the functions of many of the businesses within it were emphatically global. *But ours was an American story*.
>
> (2001, emphasis mine)

From 9/11 to Afghanistan: the 'War on Terror' and the war for public opinion begins

Philip M. Taylor, in his keynote address in 1995 on military–media relations at the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst, pointed out that 'war, to put it bluntly, is good for the media business'. In the United States, media personality Danny Schechter, executive editor of the non-profit web site <www.media.channel.org>, wrote in November 2001 about how the media started being 'managed' post September 11 as 'American media empires seemed to be marching in lockstep with the government.' Schechter clarified that networks also 'have their reasons to cooperate … [and] that while war leashes devastation and death on people, it delivers ratings and brings life to television. War is often the "big story" (when sex isn't) and a defining moment for many journalists' (Media Channel online).

The Bush Administration quickly identified 9/11 as being the work of Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. From the moment bin Laden's name was mentioned, within minutes of what TV anchors then described as 'apparent terrorist attacks', the public was told that he was the enemy in 'America's New War'. Bin Laden's face and the Al-Qaeda training camps became a regular feature on television. In his speech to Congress on September 20, 2001, President George W. Bush declared a 'war against terrorism' and described the conflict as 'those governed by fear who want to destroy our wealth and freedoms'. He also drew a clear line between those who supported terrorism and those who were ready to fight it (of course at the side of the United States) and set the tone for the future clearly by saying 'you're either with us, or against us'. So while the Pentagon was preparing 'Operation Infinite Justice' (later renamed 'Operation Enduring Freedom' since it was pointed out that only God dispenses infinite justice) to launch attacks against Afghanistan, the Deputy Defense Secretary of the Bush

Administration, Paul Wolfowitz, went on record saying that the United States 'will use all our resources. It's not just simply a matter of capturing people and holding them accountable, but removing the sanctuaries, removing the support systems, ending states who sponsor terrorism.' This is a clear assertion legitimating pre-emptive military strikes and action whenever the United States deems it necessary.

From the days and weeks following 9/11, till the United States attacked Afghanistan in October 2002, and most recently Iraq in March 2003, US broadcast media have managed to maintain a sustained level of patriotism fanning the public mood to keep the United States safe by whatever means possible. Television channel logos since 9/11 carry blurbs ranging from 'America Under Attack' to 'America Strikes Back', 'America at War', 'America's New War', to 'Operation Enduring Freedom' for the war in Afghanistan, and most recently 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' for the war in Iraq. There has been a frenzy of using the US flag in every public and private space, with the president sporting a pin of the Stars and Stripes on his jacket lapel at all times. The use of the flag, remarks Tim Mitchell, is almost a reflex of the US war of images. He notes its curative powers for soothing a social trauma like 9/11, but cautions of the danger 'of mobilizing national energies and passions' (especially when there is no determinate enemy, i.e., when 'terror' is the enemy) so that it becomes 'as much a part of the illness as it is part of the cure' (2001: 22).

Criticism of US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have been largely excluded from the televisual frame and Kellner's continuing work (1990, 1992, 2002, 2003b) on media manipulation points out how this

> lack of debate in the U.S. corporate broadcasting media points to an intensifying crisis of democracy in the United States. While the media are supposed to debate issues of public importance and present a wide range of views during the epoch of the Terror War, they have largely privileged the Bush administration and Pentagon positions … most of the rest of the world, and significant sectors within U.S. society, invisible on television, however, opposed Bush administration policy and called for more multilateral approaches to problems like terrorism.
>
> (Kellner 2003b online)

By contrast, there has been widespread alternative and critical discussion to some extent in the print media even in the United States, and most of all on the Internet. As Washington journalists Leonard Downie Jr. and Robert Kaiser wrote,

> Sept. 11, a day of terror and dread, was, for most Americans, a day of television. We gathered in front of the ubiquitous box, staring at images of horror that were repeated again and again. But Sept. 12 belonged to the newspapers, and reminded us why, even now, decades into the electronic

> era, newspapers remain so important. On the 12th, all across America, people who don't normally read a paper bought a copy and devoured it.
>
> (2002 online)

This is the quandary that the Bush Administration faces in 'winning the war on ideas' as President George W. Bush himself termed it. Public opinion in the country is now more than ever vulnerable to what is reported both inside and outside the United States.

The Internet of course has been the cornerstone for anti-war views and open, critical debate of US policies. According to a survey done by alternet.org,

> many [in the United States] have … taken to surfing the Internet for their information, reading critical reports on the progress and logic of the [American] campaign from sites like the U.K.'s Guardian, Dawn (Pakistan's English Daily) and Alter.Net.Org (whose readership soared 500 percent in the days after Sept. 11). London's BBC has reported a record number of Americans tuning into their Web site, radio and television broadcasts.
>
> (2001 online)

This makes it possible of course to gauge many views not only from within the United States, but also from the rest of the world.

After initial support, especially immediately post-9/11, public opinion worldwide increasingly started opposing US policies. Alternet.org (2001 online) reported that already by November,

> public approval of America's war in Afghanistan … in England, from a peak on par with U.S. public opinion right after the Sept. 11th attacks, support for the bombing campaign fell to two-thirds. In France, support dropped from two-thirds to half … harder still to ignore will be the views from the Middle East where negative opinion about the war on terrorism has been of huge concern to the U.S. government. Never before in wartime has the U.S. had to work so hard to contain the views of it enemies.

But it is not just the outside world that the administration is having to contend with. On November 11, 2001, the front page of *The New York Times* carried a long piece on 'the battle to shape public opinion' and reported on the Bush Administration's strategies. The article acknowledges that the administration has enforced 'policies ensuring that journalists have little or no access to independent information about military strategies, successes and failures'. It also noted that public opinion worldwide increasingly opposes US policies.

There have been heated discussions and protests against the so-called 'information lockdown' on the part of the Bush Administration, particularly on Internet web sites. In its commentary, the online version of *The Nation* (2001) wrote:

> a Cone of Silence has descended over all of Washington: From four star generals to lowly webmasters, the town is in information lockdown. Never in the nation's history has the flow of information from government to press and public been shut off so comprehensively and quickly as in the weeks following September 11. Much of the shutdown seems to have little to do with preventing future terrorism and everything to do with the Administration's laying down a new across-the-board standard for centralized control of the public's right to know.

Discussions on the online <freedomforum.org> (2001) reported that

> at a time when public diplomacy abroad and public reassurance at home should be a crucial component of the war on terrorism, US government officials are moving forcefully to restrict or compromise the primary agent of both efforts – the American press … no reasonable person would argue that the press be told every government secret or that it should print or publish everything it knows. But the press has proven time and again that it can handle news in times of crisis with restraint and responsibility. Yet many are using the current crisis to impose restraints and deny access for reasons having more to do with controlling information than with national security … information is not only a guarantor of our freedom, but also of our security … when information grows scant and the press grows timid, punditry and prattle rush to fill the credible-information void. Paranoia, panic and poor policies are the likely result.

Media professor at New York University, Mark Crispin Miller (2001 online), was quick to point out the dangers of this, saying

> the Bush Administration's efforts to control the news – with the broadcast media's willing collaboration – may be more dangerous to American democracy than any terrorist … in the United States … with its hallowed First Amendment … the government's attempts to control the news are unquestionably unpatriotic, whatever Rupert Murdoch thinks, and however genuinely terrifying the terrorist threat. It's all the more disturbing, then, to consider the range of this administration's efforts to squelch important but embarrassing news, and the extent to which at least the broadcast media have so far proved willing to abet them – a trend that bodes nothing but ill for American democracy.

Miller goes on to criticize both the administration and the US television channels in their efforts at suppressing the Al-Jazeera tapes, and makes the pertinent point that

> thanks to the White House and its high-level courtiers in the media, we Americans – or those of us without the proper hardware – are now the only

> people in the world who can't actually hear what our enemy is saying about us. That's an odd distinction, considering we are also his main targets.
>
> (Ibid.)

From Afghanistan to Iraq: playing the 'Terrorism Card' continues

The short war in Afghanistan was reported on US television very differently from other television networks. In the United States, we saw grainy, green images of 'precision' air strikes with 'little collateral damage'. Other global media networks of course showed pictures of large parts of Afghanistan being reduced to rubble, the civilian casualties caused by US bombing, the suffering of the Afghan people with the winter (of 2001) drawing near, and United Nations help with food and medicines being slow to reach them. The war in Afghanistan ended ambiguously for the Bush Administration, without any definitive news of Osama bin Laden's whereabouts, and whether or not he had survived. It appeared later that he had survived and had been involved with the recent terrorist attacks in Moscow and Bali (Risen 2002).

On the domestic front in the United States as well in 2001/2002, things were not going well for the Bush Administration. The corporate financial scandals of Enron and Worldcom were resonating and the stock markets were in free fall. The economy was not doing well, airlines were filing for bankruptcy, jobs were being cut back in large numbers. Even patriotism seemed to be on the wane. Mainline publications like *Newsweek* started openly carrying critical articles (August 19 and 26, 2002).

The attention of the US public had to be diverted. Thus, in his State of the Union address in January 2002, Bush spoke of an 'axis of evil' consisting of Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. Since then the target has narrowed further to Iraq and specifically to Saddam Hussein. In September 2002, the first anniversary of 9/11 rolled around and, once again, there occurred a media hype on television that was unmatched. We had to live once again through the horrors of that Tuesday in 2001, repeated television interviews of bereaved families, stories of courage and heroism. The remembrance and commemoration of 9/11 were gradually hitched onto a new enemy and a single target – the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. Robert Dallek, presidential historian, astutely remarked, 'the agenda just months ago was, of course, something so different. It was corporate corruption, economic slowdown. And now, all of a sudden, it's Iraq all the time' (cited in Purdum 2002 online). The word 'terror' again started becoming a linguistic staple in US broadcast media, especially television. Norman Solomon noted that

> in the propaganda end game prior to an all-out attack on Iraq, the Bush crew is playing a favorite card; as a word, terrorism can easily frighten the public and keep competing politicians at bay. And now, Washington's policy-makers are on the verge of implementing a military attack that will, in

> effect, terrorize large numbers of Iraqi people.
>
> (Solomon 2003 online: February 13)

The Bush Administration's whipping up of possible terror strikes against the United States and warmongering efforts proved sufficient for the president to get Congressional authorization for an unprecedented first strike against Iraq (Mitchell and Hulse 2002).

By the middle of February 2003, Attorney-General John Ashcroft announced an increase in the terror warning code, and US television networks lost no time in plastering 'Terror Alert: High' on television screens across the country. The Pentagon began its war plans, dubbed 'Shock and Awe', calling for hundreds of missiles to be sent into Baghdad on the first day. White House spokesman Ari Fleischer talked to the US press about 'the linking up of Iraq with Al Qaeda … a nightmare that people have warned about'. This of course has never been substantiated or proven. Things were not made much better for the United States overseas with Donald Rumsfeld's reference to France and Germany's opposition to US policies being that of 'old Europe'. Taking things to an extreme, lawmakers in the US House of Representatives changed the name of 'french fries' and 'french toast' to 'freedom fries' and 'freedom toast'!

All over the world in the meantime, even from the NATO allies of the United States, there was a call for restraint and to let the team of UN arms inspectors, led by Hans Blix, complete their job in Iraq by finding presumed weapons of mass destruction. Governments and people called for action, if any, to be led by the United Nations. British Prime Minister Tony Blair, even while supporting the US agenda all along, faced an increasingly hostile public at home. In a prewar summit with Prime Minister Blair in the Azores in mid-February 2003, President Bush spoke of the 'coalition of the willing' (generally referred to in the press worldwide as the 'coalition of the unwilling'). The massive and concerted opposition to unilateralist US foreign policy manifested itself with millions of people protesting worldwide in marches on Saturday, February 15, 2003, which went on record as the largest day of protests in the history of the world. Even in the United States, peace protests were widespread.

War in/on Iraq: one war, multiple media lenses

On March 19, 2003, the United States attacked Iraq, ostensibly fighting for 'Operation Iraqi Freedom'. Global television networks make it possible to observe world events almost as soon as they happen and sometimes even as they happen. Much has been presented on television, especially CNN's coverage of the Gulf War (see, for instance, Bauman 1989, Baudrillard 1991, Virilio 1991, Morrison 1992, Taylor 1995, Norris 1992, Kellner 1992, Robins 1996: especially chapter 3), which opened the way for global coverage of subsequent wars across the world. In the new age of electronic communication, the power of the (tele)visual is undeniable. As Robins (1996: 65) argues, 'the Gulf War was a screen-gazing war' in which television audiences could 'tele-consume' images of

the war. Since then, we have also 'tele-consumed' the post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

It is of course common knowledge that all media representations are mediated. Visual images, though realistic, are also highly selective. Any media, and in particular the visual media with their immediacy of impact, provide a window on the battlefield as it were. But that window is a flawed one. It hardly needs reiterating that in mediating news and information as they do, the media serve not just as providers of news and information to audiences, but also as providers of disinformation, thereby creating an image–reality gap. Unsurprisingly, while there was one war being fought on Iraqi soil, its representations were completely different in the United States and elsewhere in the world. Television in the United States once again broadcast scenes made for the US public, while in Europe, the Arab world, South and Southeast Asia, television was showing a vastly different war than the one presented on Fox, CNN, NBC, and others. US broadcast media labeled it 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' and 'War *in* Iraq', while Canadian CBC and Arab networks labeled it 'War *on* Iraq' and referred to the war in terms of 'occupation' or 'invasion'.

Media around the world focused much more on civilian casualties and the suffering of the Iraqi people. As Robert Jensen (2003 online) wrote,

> despite constant discussion of 'precision bombing', the U.S. invasion has produced so many dead and wounded that Iraqi hospitals stopped trying to count. Red Cross officials have labeled the level of casualties 'incredible', describing 'dozens of totally dismembered dead bodies of women and children' delivered by truck to hospitals. Cluster bombs, one of the most indiscriminate weapons in the modern arsenal, have been used by U.S. and U.K. forces, with the British defense minister explaining that mothers of Iraqi children killed would one day thank Britain for their use.

US televisual media in the meantime followed the Bush Administration's and Pentagon's promise of 'shock and awe', and depicted the war against Iraq as a great military spectacle of US might, showcasing US weapons technology, the highlighting of US troops' heroism and courage under fire, as well as their humanitarian gestures and assistance to the Iraqi people. Adding to the emotional intensity, to cite just one instance, were the hours of air time devoted to the rescue of POW, Jessica Lynch, interviews with her family members, friends, and others. NBC10 has now apparently bought the rights for a television serial on the Jessica Lynch story. The intensity of the media spectacle in Iraq was heightened by the 'embedded reporters' who were traveling with the US and British forces and who sent back live pictures about the coalition forces' triumphant onward march in Iraq. Questions have naturally arisen about the fairness and accuracy of the reporting by the 'embedded reporters'. There were some notable exceptions, one of them being the 'Nightline' correspondent on ABC, John Donvan, who went in with some other 'unilaterals' and presented viewers with a different perspective – reporting on how the Iraqis saw it as a

'takeover, not a liberation'. He also reported on 'the close-up view of collateral damage'. Reporting on a wounded Iraqi bus driver who had lost his family, Donvan stated: 'She was collateral damage. So were his two brothers. So were his two children' (cited in Solomon 2003 online: April 3).

In an image-saturated world such as the one we live in, images of course are powerful weapons. If a picture can speak a thousand words, for the US government needing to legitimize its war against Iraq, perhaps the most potent image of all was the one of Saddam Hussein's statue being toppled. As Goodnight writes,

> statue and hero are intimately connected terms … to take down a statue is to topple a hero. It is always a fatal instant when idols fall and disrespect is openly displayed. In al-Firdos Square, Iraqis tossed shoes and Americans freelanced disrespect, pulling an American flag over the head of … Hussein. The statue fell as a synecdoche for regime collapse and the completion of a 10-year old confrontation with the Bush presidencies.
>
> (2003 online: April 10)

Vice-President Dick Cheney took this image as an indication of the 'wisdom' of the battle plan and White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer asked this image to be frozen as a 'historic moment'. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld fused this image as Iraqi–American 'joy and celebration'. President Bush, in his televised address to the nation on the evening of May 1, 2003, said 'in the images of fallen statues, we have seen the beginning of a new era'. But there were other images as well – those of ransacking and looting the National Museum and the National Archives, as well as general chaos and anarchy throughout Iraq. These, included with increasing Iraqi demonstrations against US occupation, further call into question the spectacle of victory of the Bush Administration.

Concluding remarks

I conclude this chapter with the live news broadcast on television on the evening of May 1, 2003, with President George W. Bush's landing in spectacular combat style aboard the aircraft carrier the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, to address the troops there and to officially tell the US people that while the war in Iraq is over, the larger war on terror still continues. The military personnel cheered lustily and the President was visibly tearful at times as he thanked the brave men and women of the US Army and said that 'in the battle of Iraq, the U.S. and our allies have prevailed … [and that this battle was] fought for the cause of liberty and peace of the world'; 9/11 was invoked a number of times as were Ronald Reagan's 'evil empire' and the necessity of protecting the United States – 'all can know, friend and foe alike, that we will answer threats to our security and defend the peace. We will continue to hunt down the enemy before he can strike. Our mission continues.'

It is amply clear once again how disturbing this kind of message is with its

barely veiled references to pre-emptive strikes, US unilateralism in policy matters, and a seemingly endless war on terror and the countries suspected of supporting terrorism. In this scenario, there is little doubt that US corporate broadcast media, especially television, will continue to be a vehicle via which political and military agendas will be mediated, promoted, and presented; and the US's continuing war on terror will be fought to a large extent through media and information wars.

The silver lining in this is other television channels, ubiquitous throughout the world now, presenting alternative views and dissent, as well as the new medium of the Internet which has already played a key role in nurturing global justice movements and via which so much discussion and news circulates today. There is hope, like US television anchor Tom Brokaw of NBC10 News, who remarked after the President's message of May 1, 2003, that while the President talked about the Iraq war in the context of the 9/11 attacks, there is still no evidence of links of Saddam Hussein to these attacks. And a few investigative, critical journalistic voices are still around, like New York reporter Seymour Hersh, reporting on the Defense Policy Board and its ties with war profiteering. Large numbers of US citizens also disagree with their government's policies, as has been evinced by their peace protest marches, commentaries, and writings. It is not going to get any easier, particularly for the US corporate media in their decision making of what to package and how to present political agendas, but viewers and readers need to hold these media accountable by demanding their right to hear viewpoints and perspectives from across the worldwide public opinion spectrum.

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5 The Middle East's democracy deficit and the expanding public sphere

Dale F. Eickelman

Even before the events of September 11, 2001, it was already becoming clear that rapidly increasing levels of education, greater ease of travel, and the rise of new communications media were developing a public sphere in Muslim-majority societies in which large numbers of people – not just an educated, political, and economic elite – expect a say in religion, governance, and public issues. Terrorist attacks in the Muslim-majority world since then, from the October 2001 bombings in Bali to the carnage in Casablanca and Saudi Arabia in May 2003, have been accompanied by calls for democracy or promises that it is just around the corner. In an important December 2002 speech, the Director of Policy Planning at the US State Department, Richard Haass, argued that 'when given the opportunity, Muslims are embracing democratic norms and choosing democracy' and that this trend was good both for people living in Muslim-majority countries and 'also good for the United States'. He assured his audience that the United States has no 'hidden agenda' behind its motivation to encourage democracy 'in Iraq, or elsewhere in the Muslim world' (Council on Foreign Relations, 2002). By March 2003, the active phase of 'regime change' in Iraq was underway. A week after Morocco's May 16, 2003 suicide bombings in Casablanca, the main slogan of demonstrators was 'no to terrorism, yes to democracy', in Arabic, Amazighi (a first for Morocco), and French. Yet there were limits to the proclaimed tolerance, as the police banned two organized Muslim 'moderate' groups, Abdesslam Yassine's unrecognized 'Justice and Welfare' movement (*al-'adl wa-l-ihsan*) and the recognized Justice and Development Party (PJD) from taking part (*Le Monde* 2003). Many Moroccans took this prohibition as one of the continuing signs of the government's efforts to limit the possibility of the PJD sweeping to power in the municipal elections scheduled for September 2003 – elections already postponed because of reaction to the regime change in Iraq. In Morocco as elsewhere, state authorities continue in many ways to be arbitrary and restrict what is said in the press, the broadcast media, and in public, but with new media – including satellite television, the widespread circulation of video and audio cassettes, and growing Internet access – the methods of avoiding such censorship and control have rapidly proliferated. Today, silence in public no longer implies ignorance. Instead, it often implies prudence or the realization that the price of resistance outweighs that of evident compliance.

Silence and apparent acquiescence are weapons of the weak. In some countries of the Arabian Peninsula, a 'politics of silence' in which audiences at official events applaud tepidly rather than with enthusiasm, is one of the few forms of public protest available, despite the simulacra of democratic forms offered by repressive and authoritarian governments (Waterdrinker 1993). For instance, Tunisia's President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali was re-elected with 99 percent of cast ballots in 1994, but few Tunisians take at face value his response to a French journalist's question that such results, far from being 'a bit too good', merely reflect 'the profound realities of the Arab-Muslim world', and the vote results in 'a massive adhesion to a project of national salvation' (Ben Ali 1994). Public silence in Tunisia in the face of such claims does not equal agreement with them, and the same holds true for Egypt, Syria, and the other countries of the region.

The recognition that silence does not necessarily mean support also places new pressures on the external support for regimes reluctant or unable to acknowledge the changing shape of the 'public' in the Middle East. Washington policy makers recognized the implications of this new sense of the public in the Arab world well before the September 11 terrorist attacks. Among them, it is called the 'Arab street', a term sometimes used by the Arab media itself:

> a new phenomenon of public accountability, which we have seldom had to factor into our projections of Arab behavior in the past. The information revolution, and particularly the daily dose of uncensored television coming out of local TV stations like al-Jazeera and international coverage by CNN and others, is shaping public opinion, which, in turn, is pushing Arab governments to respond. We do not know, and the leaders themselves do not know, how that pressure will impact on Arab policy in the future.
>
> (Walker 2001)

The use of the term 'street', rather than 'public sphere' or 'public', imputes passivity, unruliness, or a propensity to easy manipulation, and implies a lack of formal or informal leadership. Nonetheless, its recent contextual use indicates that policy makers at least acknowledge that even regional authoritarian and single-party states now have local 'publics' to take into account, and that Arab states must now deal with both their domestic and external publics. Indeed, the combination of near-simultaneous and inexpensive communication also means that the Lebanese communities of California, Québec, and New York can participate meaningfully in the affairs of their country of origin, as can Algerians in France and Canada. The result is not always greater transparency or new possibilities for political participation, but the missed opportunities caused by their lack are increasingly evident to larger numbers of people. Imputations of 'crowd' or 'street' behavior often are based on the inability of authorities or observers to recognize changing implicit – or highly explicit – ideas of equity and justice, as was the case with protests in England in the 1820s against the rising costs of milling grain or the Teheran bread riots of December 1942 (McFarland 1985). Although the pejorative term 'Arab street' lingers on,

observers and authorities increasingly acknowledge, even if reluctantly, that the 'street' is articulate and capable of interpreting events and organizing in ways other than those explicitly authorized by the state.

I write these lines from the *madina*, the old walled city, of Fez, Morocco, in May 2003. I arrived in Morocco one day after the beginning of overt hostilities on March 19. Darb Bishara, the neighborhood where I live, is twelve minutes by fast walk to the nearest motor roads and taxi stands, a walk that takes me along Tal'a Sghira, one of the main *madina* thoroughfares, crowded most of the day with donkeys, mules, pushcarts, peddlers, and pedestrians. The larger cafés along the way have television sets and the smaller ones radios. Everyone avidly followed the news reports from Iraq, but few of the sets were tuned to the Moroccan state media. They were, however, after the attacks of fourteen suicide bombers in Casablanca on May 16.

Except for local events, state television and radio have lost the battle for eyes and ears. During the campaign in Iraq, most of the sets were tuned to Al-Jazeera Satellite Television or one of the newer Arab satellite channels. Médi 1, the private North African radio station broadcasting from Tangiers with a mix of Arabic and French, dominated the radio sets. Not just among the intelligentsia but also among the shopkeepers and the street peddlers who stop for tea, the state-controlled broadcast media are listened to primarily for the 'official story'. Its limitations are recognized by virtually its entire audience. Even in the economically 'on-the-edge' parts of the old city, such as my quarter, satellite dishes dot the rooftops. Not everyone has satellite TV, but everyone gets exposed to it in the course of the working day.

Although most people do not use the full spectrum of available channels, all major European and Arabic satellite channels can appear on many sets at the press of a button. Everyone compared stories, and there was an understanding of the approaches that different media take. Everyone was skeptical of the changing US official story of why the 'coalition' invaded Iraq. Cheers occasionally were heard up and down the street, as for a soccer match, when Saddam made a live-on-videotape appearance on Iraqi or Al-Jazeera Satellite TV. By April 10, there was a general recognition that the 'war' had turned against Saddam Husayn. The front page of *al-Sharq al-Awsat* was dominated by a huge photograph of a statue of Mr. Husayn being toppled from its pedestal, with the large-type headline, 'and the Regime of Saddam is Toppled' (*wa-yasqut nizam Saddam*), but the party-sponsored local press confined itself to saying that 'obscurity' prevailed in what was happening in Iraq. Satellite television was unambiguous.

After the fall of Baghdad, discussion along this particular Arab 'street' in the Fez *madina* was eerily like discussions in the Western press: What happens next? Will the United States (Britain was scarcely mentioned) bring a better government? What will be the Turkish reaction, especially if Iraq's Kurds are given voice in government? The term 'democracy' (*al-dimuqratiya*) was used only by the educated, but a greater number of people are aware of the restrictions placed on their genuine political participation. Discussion was more animated in private

homes. And after the bombings in Casablanca, people actively argued in the semi-public of coffee shops what 'Islam' says about suicide bombings. Few called the suicide bombers 'martyrs' (*shuhada*) and used the term 'suicide operations' (*'amaliyal intihariya*) instead. Of course, anyone using the term 'martyrdom operations' in public would raise security concerns. Nonetheless, the Arab 'street' is rapidly evolving from the shapeless and manipulable image that it possesses in the West, and there is a more concrete awareness than in the past of the benefits of more open societies.

Being Muslim and modern

The spread of higher education, greater mobility, and proliferating and accessible means of communication have contributed significantly to the fragmentation of religious and political authority, challenging authoritarianism in many domains (see Eickelman and Anderson 1999, Eickelman 1992). This process could lead to more open societies, just as globalization has been accompanied by such developments as Vatican II and secular human rights movements. Many movements show the positive side of globalization, in which small but determined transnational groups work toward goals that improve the human condition. The leaders of such movements in the Arab and the Muslim-majority worlds, including interpreters of religious matters, often lack theological and philosophical sophistication as recognized by scholars with formal religious training. Some of these new leaders can, however, motivate minorities and at least persuade wider publics of the justice of their causes, changing implicit, practical understandings of ethical issues in the process.

There is also a darker side to globalization. The fragmentation of authority and the growing ability of large numbers of people to participate in wider spheres of religious and political debate and practical action can also have highly negative outcomes. Osama Bin Laden and the al-Qa'ida terrorist movement epitomize this darker side. The al-Qa'ida organization is not noted primarily for its theological sophistication. In quality of thought, Bin Laden and his associates, such as the Egyptian physician Ayman al-Zawahiri, are no match for Thomas Hobbes, Martin Heidegger, Egypt's (and Qatar's) Yusuf al-Qaradawi, or Syria's Muhammad Shahrur. Al-Qa'ida has, nonetheless, demonstrated a public relations genius that – combined with massive and dramatic terrorist acts – caught the world by surprise and reinforced its public declarations of anti-Western sentiments. Although al-Qa'ida's leadership may be on the run, recent events indicate that the activities inspired by al-Qa'ida, facilitating local terrorist 'operations' in a transnational framework, have become part of the fabric of modern social and political life.

The Bin Laden/al-Qa'ida view of world politics gains its power and timelessness by appealing to unity and faith regardless of the balance of power against them, and by attributing the evils of this world to Christians and Jews as well as to Muslims who associate with them (and thus subvert the goals of the *umma*, the worldwide community of true believers). Does not the Qur'an say that polythe-

ists should be fought until they cease to exist (Q. 9:5) and that those who do not rule by God's law are unbelievers, who, by implication, should be resisted (Q. 5:44)?

These interpretations of scripture are highly contestable and should not be taken as harbingers of a coming 'clash of civilizations' or as, in Gilles Kepel's (1992) more ecumenical phrase, the 'revenge of God'. This 'theology' does not go back to ancient roots or to the Qur'an, although some extremists make such claims, but is thoroughly modern; it is basically an update of the beliefs of Islamic Jihad, an Egyptian group best known for its assassination of Anwar al-Sadat in 1981. Only a tiny minority has been inspired to lethal action by such interpretations. However, it builds on a hybrid and transnational social base that can bring together the totally different worlds of 'uneducated Pashtun villagers and rich Arab city dwellers' (Kermani 2002: 15). Some elements of the al-Qa'ida message – especially accounts of injustices perpetrated against Muslims in Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir, and elsewhere – capture the imagination of broad circles, although their agreement does not translate into action.

Many voices and practices in the Muslim world call for or tend toward more open societies and diverse religious interpretations (Eickelman 1998). Even if ignored because they are not heard in English or the major European languages, they are becoming more significant, and most fall between the opposite poles of intolerant fanaticism and ethical pluralism, showing instead an ongoing engagement with changing social and political conditions. Nonetheless, cautious autocracies are hesitant to contest directly the advocates of fanaticism and intolerance. There will always be ideas at hand to justify intolerance and violence, and there will also always be ways for terrorists to manipulate open societies for their nefarious ends; countering radical ideologies and theologies of violence is not easy, especially when a more effective long-term response is to open political and economic decision making to wider opportunity and greater transparency. Yet the proliferation of voices openly debating the role of Islam in contemporary societies contributes significantly to weakening the appeal of extremism.

One Islamic thinker in the Gulf region, for example, argues that the principle of equality as a foundational idea was firmly established in the US Declaration of Independence in 1776, but that the implementation of the principle took nearly two centuries to achieve. The right for free men to vote on an equal basis was granted only in 1850, and African–American males got the right to vote in 1870. Women got the right to vote in 1920, and the poll tax was eliminated only in 1964. He sees the Islamic principle of *shura*, or consultation, as identical to democracy, and as an idea that can only be achieved incrementally and never fully realized, as in the American case (Sulaiman 1998: 7). In a similar manner, Syria's Muhammad Shahrur, in his many books and on satellite television, calls for a rethinking of the Islamic tradition to break the hold of the '*ulama* ('the body of learned men' – that is, canonical religious authorities) and popular preachers on Qur'anic interpretation.[2] In Morocco, conventional religious thought, shared by jurists and ordinary people alike, is that God alone determines who acquires the status of martyr, so that extremist doctrines justifying suicidal action as

leading to the gates of paradise is a fallacious presumption of God's will (*qudrat Allah*).

Thinkers and religious leaders like Turkey's Fethullah Güd Indonesia's Nurcholish Madjid hold that democracy and Islam are fully compatible and that Islam prescribes no particular form of governance, certainly not arbitrary rule. They argue that the central Qur'anic message is that Muslims must take responsibility for their own society. Even the headscarf is not essential, Gülen argues – taking up a theme as politically explosive in Turkey as it is in France – only the requirement of modest dress and comportment. The views of such thinkers (and there are many) are less well known outside the Arab and Muslim-majority worlds than, for instance, once were the views of Solidarity activists in Poland or the advocates of liberation theology. It is not just intellectuals and thinkers with national and transnational reputations that make such arguments. Ideas of tolerance and the respect for religious difference also form part of the debates and practices of ordinary villagers and workers in places such as Chitral, Pakistan, near the border with Afghanistan (Marsden 2002). The courage of those in the Islamic world who advocate toleration, even those who practice it in private without articulating their views, is remarkable. These thinkers recognize that there are many religious differences between Islam and the West, but they also acknowledge many important points in common.

Modern transnational videos

In the years ahead, open communication and public diplomacy will be increasingly significant in countering the image that the likes of the al-Qa'ida terrorist network and Osama Bin Laden assert for themselves as 'guardians of Islamic values'. Such public diplomacy will emanate not only from Europe and North America, but also from Muslim-majority countries themselves, as they recognize the increasing importance of communicating effectively with local and transnational audiences. Al-Qa'ida itself may fade from prominence, but the views it advocates resonate within the Muslim-majority world and have parallels outside it. In the fight against terrorism, for which Bin Laden has been the photogenic icon, the first step is to recognize that he is as thoroughly a part of the modern world as was Cambodia's French-educated Pol Pot. Bin Laden presents himself as a traditional Islamic warrior brought up to date (though the 'tradition' is an invented one). The language and content of his videotaped appeals asserts his modernity even more strongly, although less obviously, than do his camouflage jacket, Kalashnikov, and Timex watch.

Consider the Arabic-language two-hour al-Qa'ida recruitment videotape that has made its way since May 2000 to many Middle Eastern video shops and Western news media.[3] It is a skillful production, as fast-paced and gripping as any Hindu fundamentalist video justifying the destruction in 1992 of the Ayodhya mosque in India, or the political 'attack videos' used in US presidential campaigning.[4] The 1988 'Willie Horton' campaign video – which showed a mug shot of a convicted rapist who had committed a second rape during a weekend

furlough from a Massachusetts prison, while a voice-over portrayed Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis as 'soft' on crime – was a marketing masterpiece that combined a conventional, if explicit, message with a menacing, underlying one intended to galvanize undecided voters. The al-Qa'ida video, although it was directed at a different audience – presumably Arab youth who are alienated, unemployed, and often living in desperate conditions – shows an equal mastery of modern propaganda.

The recruitment video begins with the attack on the USS *Cole* in Yemen then cuts to a montage implying coordinated worldwide aggression against Muslims in Palestine, Jerusalem, Lebanon, Chechnya, Kashmir, and Indonesia. Images follow of US generals being received by Saudi princes, intimating collusion with the infidel West by leaders of oppressive Muslim regimes, thereby undermining their legitimacy. The tape continues by attributing the sufferings of the Iraqi people to American brutality against Muslims. Many of the images are taken from daily Western video news; the BBC and CNN logos add to their authenticity, just as the rebroadcast by CNN and the BBC of Qatar's Al-Jazeera Satellite Television logo has added authenticity to Western coverage of Bin Laden.

Alternating with these scenes of devastation and oppression are images of Osama Bin Laden – posing in front of bookshelves or seated on the ground like an Islamic religious scholar, holding in his hand the Qur'an. Radiating charismatic authority, he recounts the Prophet Muhammad's flight (*hijra*) from Mecca to Medina. The Prophet Muhammad made the *hijra* with a small group of loyal supporters to escape an attack by his enemies, primarily the 'idolators' from his own tribe, the Quraysh. Later, when his movement gained strength in Madina, Muhammad returned in triumph to Mecca. The videotape repeatedly invokes the analogy. Bin Laden also stresses the need for a jihad, or struggle, for the cause of Islam against the 'crusaders' and 'Zionists'. Later images show military training in Afghanistan (including target practice at a video of Bill Clinton projected against a wall). A final sequence portrays – as the word 'solution' flashes across the screen and a voice-over recites from the Qur'an – an Israeli soldier in full riot gear retreating from a Palestinian boy throwing stones.

A thoroughly modern fanatic

Osama Bin Laden, like many of his associates, is thoroughly imbued with not only the techniques but also the values of the modern world, even if only to reject them. A 1971 photograph shows him at age 14 on a family holiday in Oxford, in Britain, posing with two half-brothers and some Spanish girls their own age. English would have been their common language. Bin Laden had studied English at a private school in Jidda, and English was also useful for his civil engineering courses at King Abdul Aziz University. Unlike many of his now-estranged half-brothers, who were educated in Europe and the United States as well as in Saudi Arabia, Osama studied only in Saudi Arabia; nonetheless, he was familiar with European society and profoundly aware of the

presence and influence of the many Americans, Europeans, and other foreigners living in Saudi Arabia and essential to the functioning of its economy and many of its state institutions.

The organizational skills he learned in the university came into play when he joined the construction company founded by his father and later the *mujahidin* ('strugglers', or holy warriors) against the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Whether or not he actually met US intelligence officers in the field, they, like their Saudi and Pakistani counterparts who worked with Bin Laden, were pleased at his participation and his willingness to recruit fighters from throughout the Arab world and beyond (Cooley 1999). Likewise, Bin Laden's many business enterprises flourished, even under highly adverse conditions. In both settings, he skillfully sustained a flexible multinational organization in the face of opposition, moving cash, people, and supplies almost undetected across international frontiers.

If Western policy makers and intelligence professionals never underestimated the organizational effectiveness of Bin Laden and his associates, neither should they underestimate their ability to convey a message that appeals to at least some Muslims. Elements of the Bin Laden message, if not his tactics, tap into widespread sentiments held by many Muslims. The message of the tapes also demonstrate that one need not have credentials as an established Islamic scholar in order to have one's ideas taken seriously. As Sudan's former attorney-general and speaker of the parliament, the Sorbonne-educated Hasan al-Turabi (also leader of his country's Muslim Brotherhood), asserted two decades ago, 'Because all knowledge is divine and religious, a chemist, an engineer, an economist, or a jurist' are all men of learning (al-Turabi 1983). Bin Laden, a civil engineer, exemplifies Turabi's point. Some in his audience do not look for ability to cite authoritative texts; instead, they respond to his apparent skill in applying generally accepted religious tenets to current political and social issues.

Beyond the Arab and Muslim 'streets'

Bin Laden's lectures circulate in book form in the Arab world, but video and short taped audio messages are the main vehicles of communication. Mass education and new communications technologies enable large numbers of Arabs to hear – and see – al-Qa'ida's message directly. The use of CNN-like 'zippers' – the ribbons of words streamed beneath images – shows that al-Qa'ida takes for granted rising levels of education. Increasingly, its audience has access to both conventional and new media, such as the Internet.[5] The entry of the Middle East into an era of mass communication has established standard Arabic (as opposed to its widely differing and often mutually incomprehensible regional dialects) as a lingua franca. In Morocco in the early 1970s, for instance, rural people might ask speakers of standard Arabic to 'translate' newscasts in the transnational speech of the state radio into local, colloquial Arabic. Today this is no longer required.

Bin Laden's message does not depend on religious themes alone. Like that of

the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, his message contains many secular elements. Khomeini often alluded to the 'wretched of the earth' and drew on images appealing to Third World militants in general. This enabled him to draw support from secular leftists as well as the religiously informed. At least for a time, Khomeini's language appealed equally to Iran's religiously minded sector and its secular left, although he soon turned with a vengeance against the secular left. For Bin Laden, the equivalent themes are the oppression and corruption of many Arab governments, for which he lays the blame – as he does for violence and oppression in Palestine, Kashmir, Chechnya, and elsewhere – on the West. One need not be religious to rally to such themes. A poll taken in Morocco in late September 2001 showed that, though a majority of Moroccans condemned the September 11 bombings, 41 percent sympathized with Bin Laden's message (*Le Journal Hebdomadaire* 2001). An early November 2001 poll of 11,500 Muslims in Britain showed that only 21 percent thought that the United States was justified in blaming al-Qa'ida for the attacks on 11 September and that 57 percent disagreed with Prime Minister Tony Blair when he claimed that the US and British military action in Afghanistan was not an attack on Islam.[6]

Osama Bin Laden and the al-Qa'ida terrorist movement are thus reaching at least part of the Arab 'street' – and Morocco, which once thought that it was immune from internally organized terrorist attacks because of the bloody series of events in neighboring Algeria since the early 1990s, became painfully aware in May 2003 that no one is immune. The US director of central intelligence, George J. Tenet, testified before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in February 2001,

> the right catalyst – such as the outbreak of Israeli-Palestinian violence – can move people to act. Through access to the Internet and other means of communication, a restive [Arab] public is increasingly capable of taking action without any identifiable leadership or organizational structure.[7]

By 'without any identifiable leadership or organized structure' George Tenet does not mean an absence of leadership altogether but of leadership detectable by governments that have lost the confidence of significant elements of their society. An emerging Palestinian leader, say, would be foolhardy to allow him- or herself to become identifiable to Israeli or other security services, including those loyal to Yasir 'Arafat.

Beyond the democracy deficit

The Middle East in general has a democracy deficit, in which 'unauthorized' leaders or critics, such as Saad Eddin Ibrahim – founder and director of Cairo's Ibn Khaldoun Centre for Development Studies, a non-governmental organization that promoted democracy in Egypt – suffer harassment or prison terms, or a newspaper editor is sentenced to four years in prison for satirizing the monarch's claims to sacred status (Rhangi 2003). It is because many governments in the

Middle East are deeply suspicious of an open press, non-governmental organizations, and unrestricted expression that the 'restive' public, increasingly educated and influenced by hard-to-censor new media, can take action.

One consequence of the democracy deficit is to magnify the power of appeals to extremist solutions in the Arab world. Bin Laden, speaking in the vivid language of popular Islamic preachers, builds on a deep and widespread resentment against the West and the local ruling elites associated with it. The lack of formal outlets for opinion on public concerns makes it easier for zealots, claiming the mantle of religion, to hijack the Arab 'street'.

One immediate response possible for the West is to acknowledge the existence of the Arab and other Middle Eastern publics and to learn to speak directly to them. This task has already begun, and an available point of access for the Arabic-speaking world is Al-Jazeera, which was obscure to all except specialists until 11 September 2001. This Qatari satellite television network is a premier source in the Arab world of uncensored news and opinion. It is more, however, than the Arab equivalent of CNN. Uncensored news and opinions increasingly shape public opinion even in places like Damascus and Algiers. Whether accidental or not, the bombing of its studios twice in Afghanistan in November 2001 and its broadcast facilities in Baghdad during the Iraqi invasion serve to enhance its credibility as an independent and critical voice shaping transnational public opinion in Arabic. Public opinion, in turn, pushes Arab governments to be more responsive to their citizens, or at least to say that they are. The unabashedly American Radio Sawa is another such effort. Although currently composed mostly of MTV-like music and aimed at a young audience it may eventually play a role in shaping public opinion and alternative views of society.

Far from seeking to censor Al-Jazeera, limit al-Qa'ida's access to the Western media, or create a *de facto* Office of Disinformation within the Pentagon – an unfortunate early proposal of the US government after the September terror attacks – the United States should specifically avoid censorship. Al-Qa'ida statements should be treated with the same caution as any other news source, although Al-Jazeera's regular reporting from places such as Ramallah and Gaza offers a searing antidote to the ugly face of Israeli actions in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Ironically, at almost the same moment that national security advisor Condoleezza Rice asked the US television networks in October 2001 not to air unedited al-Qa'ida videos, a former senior CIA officer, Graham Fuller, was explaining in Arabic on Al-Jazeera how US policy making works. His appearance on Al-Jazeera made a significant impact, as did Secretary of State Colin Powell's presence on a later program and that of former US Ambassador Christopher Ross, who speaks fluent Arabic. Likewise, the timing and content of the response of Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain to an earlier Bin Laden tape suggests how to take the emerging Arab public seriously. The day after Al-Jazeera broadcast the Bin Laden tape, Blair asked for and received an opportunity to respond. In his reply, Blair – in a first for a Western leader – directly addressed the Arab public through the Arab media, explaining coalition

goals in attacking al-Qa'ida and the Taliban, and challenging Bin Laden's claim to speak in the name of Islam. The BBC may not have been pleased to see the British prime minister grant an important 'exclusive' to a rival news organization, but the Arab public gave almost as much importance to Blair's choice of venue as to his message, for he implicitly acknowledged the importance of this 'new' public.

Such appearances enhance the West's ability to communicate its primary message – that the war against terrorism is a struggle not of one civilization against another but against terrorism and fanaticism in all societies. Western policies and actions are subject to public scrutiny and are quite likely to be misunderstood, especially by people living under closed regimes or faced with apparent contradictory emphases in foreign policy and actions. US government statements about the evil of the Iraqi regime are hard to explain to the 'street' when the US leadership appears unable or even unwilling to restrain Israeli incursions into the West Bank and Gaza. Public diplomacy can significantly diminish some misapprehensions, but it may also require bold policy decisions. For instance, the limits of the US ability to exert pressure on Israel to alter its methods of dealing with Palestinians have become increasingly apparent – and the US ability to bring 'democracy' to bear on the Palestinian–Israeli conflict after the fall of Baghdad will be followed with special care in the Arab world and elsewhere.

Western public diplomacy in the Middle East also entails great care in uncharted waters. As an Oxford University social linguist, Clive Holes, has pointed out, the linguistic genius who thought up the original name for the campaign to oust the Taliban, 'Operation Infinite Justice', did a major disservice to the Western goal. The expression was literally and accurately translated into Arabic as *'adala ghayr mutanahiya*, connoting an earthly power arrogating to itself the task of divine retribution. Likewise, President George W. Bush's inadvertent and unscripted use of the word 'crusade' during an ecumenical religious service at Washington's National Cathedral in September 2001 gave al-Qa'ida spokesmen – and many others – an opportunity to attack the intentions of Bush and the West.

Mistakes will be made, but information and arguments that reach the Arab public sphere, including on Al-Jazeera, will eventually have an impact for good or for ill. Some Westerners might condemn Al-Jazeera as biased because it shapes its choice of news stories for the interests of its primary market, as do the Western media. However, Al-Jazeera has already broken a taboo by regularly inviting official Israeli spokespersons to comment live on current issues and it is available in Israel through some cable services. Muslim religious scholars, both in the Middle East and in the West, have already spoken out on the network against al-Qa'ida's claim to act in the name of Islam. Other courageous voices, such as Egyptian playwright Ali Salem, have even employed humor for that purpose.[8]

The United States and Europe must recognize that the best way to mitigate the continuing threat of terrorism is to encourage Middle Eastern states to be increasingly responsive to longings for real participation in governance, and to

aid local non-governmental organizations working toward this goal. As occurred in Egypt in the case of Saad Eddin Ibrahim, and in Morocco with jailed editor Ali Lmrabet, some countries may see such activities as subversive. Nonetheless, and whether Arab and other Middle Eastern ruling elites like it or not, their 'streets' are turning into a public sphere that expects to be heard on public issues and matters of governance.

Notes

1 I am grateful to James Piscatori for generously sharing with me an unpublished paper in progress concerning the Bin Laden/al-Qa'ida view of world politics. Qur'anic citations (such as 9:5) refer to chapter (*sura*) and verse.
2 For an introduction to the thinking of Muhammad Shahrur, see Eickelman (1993: 163–168) and Eickelman (2001: 7). For a concise statement of Shahrur's beliefs in his own words, see Shahrur (2000).
3 It is now available online with explanatory notes in English. See http://www.ciaonet.org/cbr/cbr00/video/excerpts/excerpts_index.html.
4 See, for example, the Hindi-language film Pran jaye par vachan na jaye (We can give up our lives, but we cannot break our vow), fifty-five minutes, Delhi, Jain Studios, 1992. I am grateful to Dr. Christiane Brosius for providing me with a translation and annotated story board of the video. See also Brosius (1999: 99–136).
5 On the importance of rising levels of education and the new media, see Eickelman (2000: 16–20).
6 Poll conducted by ICM Research for BBC 4, November, 2–11, 2001. On the World Wide Web athttp://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/reports/features/muslimpoll.html.
7 See Tenet (2001).
8 See Salem (2001).

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6 Political Islam in Iran and the emergence of a religious public sphere

The impact of September 11

Mahmoud Alinejad

Introduction

> The September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States could only be the work of a people who had cut out their own tongues and ears to speak and hear nothing but destruction and death. [Likewise] turning a deaf ear to the voices of agony of the [Muslim] children, women and the elderly suffering under [U.S.] air attacks is only in the capacity of a people overwhelmed with the feeling of supremacy and rage of revenge.
>
> (Khatami 2001a)

Long before the event on September 11, 2001 (in fact more than two decades earlier), the frontlines of what was feared to be 'America's war against Islam' were drawn in what then seemed an unlikely political geography. In Iran in the late 1970s, 'suddenly out of nowhere' came this massive revolutionary movement in the name of Islam. It ousted the Shah (the staunchest and most loyal ally the United States would ever have in the Muslim Middle East) only to prepare the stage for the face-to-face confrontation of Islam with the 'Great Satan' (or rather, the United States with the 'Axis of Evil'). And the frontlines of a future war were drawn when Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini announced (after his triumphant return to Iran from exile in 1979 as the leader of the first Islamic revolution of the postcolonial age) that the United States was out to get Islam and that all other conflicts in the world were mere distractions, only to cover up the US's ultimate goal: the destruction of 'true Islam' by all means (military, political, cultural, communicational, etc.), even by creating an 'American Islam'.

Despite his belonging to Shi'ism (a minority religion within the larger Sunni Islamic world), Ayatollah Khomeini was addressing the Islamic *umma* (a transnational, transcultural, truly global entity). He was, perhaps, the first among Muslim scholastic *ulama* worldwide (including the Sunni *ulama*) to anticipate the imminence of a phenomenon, which then seemed still unlikely. He envisaged that Islam (replacing communism) would soon emerge as the US's foremost ideological and political rival in the context of the high-tech transnational and transcultural milieu that was to be a feature of the global age.

This new milieu (although it was designed and driven primarily by US media

institutions, and largely in line with US 'national interests') certainly suited a new generation of Islamists that was emerging as a major political and ideological protagonist of the future (in ethnic, national, and transnational representations). In this milieu, religious rhetoric would dominate political language, and modern religious ideologies would inspire modern religious wars.

The war that was declared by George W. Bush in revenge for the September 11 attacks came to many Muslims in Iran (and elsewhere in the Muslim world) as only a confirmation of Ayatollah Khomeini's prophecy. Ironically, though, President Bush seemed the least likely candidate to make such a declaration. His dubious winning of the presidential race in 2000 had made him a seemingly weak president. But the exigencies of time soon made him the first president that would take the United States to its religious origins through new religious wars: 'war on terror', 'war for the liberation of the oppressed'; and it seems more wars are yet to come. He was frank enough to promise no definitive end to the wars that the United States must fight against 'Evil'. In a sense, Bush's rise from a humble origin to prominence resembled the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini from a junior religious rank in a minority Islamic sect to the leadership of an Islamic revolution with transnational appeal, and a religious state with claims to a new global order.

That the Islamic revolution of Iran (despite its origination among the minority Shi'ite Muslims) had inspired a 'fundamentalist' politico-religious thesis of militant 'Islamic resistance' against the United States (as the nemesis of Islam) within the larger Muslim world (and particularly in the *madrasa* system) had always been feared. The Hizbullah, the Islamic Jihad, and Hamas were only a few examples of the protagonists of the militancy inspired by the 'Islamic revolution'. Nevertheless, the government and the media in the United States seemed to be shocked by and unprepared for what came on September 11, 2001.

So all seemed so unexpected, and yet how expectedly they came. The proliferating number of Islamist revivalist movements worldwide since the late 1970s (most sharing in their expression of hate for 'American hegemony') should have taught the United States something about the imminent threat of radical Islam; but it had not. The 'Attack on America' had to remain unexpected, the conspiracy theorists would say, in order to provoke in the US public a rage of revenge necessary to support the wars the United States was to wage.

Conspiracy theories aside, the Americans were pretty quick in discovering the culprits of the September 11 attacks in a group (Al-Qaeda) whose members had been trained and inculcated in the Islamist ideological schools, fashioned after the Shi'ite revolutionary *madrasas* in Iran, which had popularized the idea of *shahadat* (martyrdom). Ironically, the militancy inspired by Ayatollah Khomeini's revolutionary reading of Islam in the name of *shahadat* was actualized in the Sunni *madrasas* that had now mushroomed all over the Muslim lands through the efforts of the Arab Al-Qaeda.

It is true, as some reform-minded Iranian Islamists have been trying to assert, that two seemingly different kinds of political Islam have emerged in the Islamic world since the 1980s: a Shi'ite type in the 1980s and a Sunni type in the 1990s

(Sadr 2002). But it would be naive to ignore the historical and intellectual, not to mention structural, interconnections between the two types of political Islam. The Shi'ite type of political Islam was clearly connected with the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran influencing Shi'ite movements in Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait in the 1980s. And the Sunni type was connected with Osama Bin Laden, Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and the Wahhabi circles in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Gulf states, Daghistan, and Chechnya, as well as with the Islamic *madrasas* in Pakistan and Afghanistan. But the Shi'ite connection was no barrier against the adoption by the Sunni Islamists of the doctrinal–ideological contributions of the Shi'ite Islamists to political Islam.

The revolutionary Islamists in Iran had pursued the official policy of 'the export of the revolution' for more than a decade, well into the 1990s, to ensure the propagation of the revolutionary reading of Islam, as well as to enlist activists and sympathizers in the Muslim world. This would be achieved in various ways, even by way of inciting revolutionary insurgency against secular states ruling the Muslim nations (e.g., Iraq, Egypt, and Jordan).

The cornerstone of this revolutionary reading of Islam was the mystical idea of *shahadat*, which would deliver the soul of the *shahid* (martyr) from the sinful world, and the limbo of purgatory, into the highest levels of God's heaven. This immediate delivery of the soul would also mean the immediate cancellation of all the sins that the *shahid* might have committed before his *shahadat*. It referred to the traditional mystical idea of *leqa-Allah* (union with God), which promoted virtual annihilation of the mystic's body to set the soul free for ascendance to heavens.

Yet this new militant mysticism is distinct from traditional mysticism, based on passivity with regard to material interests (including politics), and purification of the soul through meditation, peace of mind, and love for others. In an inverse manner, it offers a fervent promotion of revolutionary politics involving the takeover of state power through the use of force, and the violent elimination of the hated other in a crave for self-annihilation. Real blood, instead of metaphoric wine, is the symbol of this new militant mysticism. And in it, the war with infidel others known as the 'lesser jihad' (*jihad-e asghar*) would take priority over the 'greater jihad' (*jihad-e akbar*), the war against the desire of the self (*nafs*) for earthly pleasure, power, and wealth. Here too, the inversion of priorities with respect to traditional mysticism has been evident.

That the Sunni type of political Islam had no apparent organizational, and little geographical, connection with the Iranian Islamic revolutionaries of Shi'ite persuasion, though, did not prevent it from adopting, very soon, a main aspect of the revolutionary reading of Islam offered by the Shi'ites: *shahadat*. The development of the most effective and most destructive Muslim weapon yet (i.e., the suicide bomber) out of the religious concept of martyrdom was certainly the contribution of the Islamic revolution to Islam's firepower in what is believed to be 'resistance at all costs against domination and occupation'.

The body of the martyr, accumulated as it is with historical feelings of repression, humiliation, victimization, frustration, and hate, has developed into potent

warfare, which has proved almost impossible to counteract at a mere technical level. Of late, and perhaps all too late, even such secular states as Iraq under Saddam Hussein took a turn for the adoption of the militant Islam inspired by martyrdom as a means to mobilize Muslim sentiments in its confrontation with the United States.

Although the reform-minded Iranian Islamists consider the Shi'ite type of political Islam a modernist movement and the Sunni type a reactionary and backward movement, it is not too difficult to see deep-seated intellectual, if not organizational, connections between the two. Certain revolutionary ideologues in Iran had virtually revived and promoted what later found a more clear-cut representation in Afghanistan under the Taliban. In its promotion of violent struggles against the 'enemies of Islam', and its strict enforcement of moral codes repressing human desire for pleasure, the revolutionary reading of Islam offered by the hard-line Iranian Islamists was not all that distant from what Al-Qaeda and the Taliban advocated. The religious hard-liners in Iran might even have been the forerunner of the so-called 'Arab Afghans'.

Yet the violence that the Islamic revolution promoted was certainly considered legitimate in that it pursued a 'good end', namely the liberation of the 'oppressed Muslim believers' from the 'oppressive Western colonizers' and the 'criminal Zionist regime'. It thus provided spiritual, if not material, support for all radical anti-Western and anti-Zionist forces, and particularly for the Islamic liberation movements, in the countries ruled by the 'puppet regimes'.

Legitimate violence notwithstanding, even within Iran the waning of the radical militancy of the revolution since the mid-1990s had made the people unprepared for the September 11 attacks. Such a strong blow against the United States on its own soil by a force that acted in the name of Islam was hardly conceivable even in the imagination of the Iranian Islamists, who were now experimenting with the so-called 'project of reform' popularized since 1997 by the reformist President Mohammad Khatami. This was the case, even though the force attacking the United States was using the familiar rhetoric of the scholastic Islamic revolutionism originated in Iran.

What the revolutionary reading of Islam brought to the Muslim world – and (thanks to the 'globalization' of the transcultural and transnational messages of Islam) to the rest of the world – was, however, much larger than the image of Osama Bin Laden, or that of Saddam Hussein for that matter. Surely, these images, constructed as they have been by the insatiable zeal of the global media networks (both Western and Islamic), seem to make it easy to define enemies worth going to war with. Yet the image of Osama and other representations of Islamic militancy represent an inescapable duality which is inherent to political Islam.

Osama, in particular, could be considered a clever student of the Islamic revolution in its high radicalism. He even seems to be representing the militant side of Islam, particularly in confrontation with the United States, even more fully than the direct inheritors of the legacy of the Islamic revolution. But his Islam, to which even secular Saddam appealed belatedly, could also be the

representation of what Ayatollah Khomeini had called the 'American Islam', one created by the United States in order to give it reason and justification to destroy the 'true Islam'. After all, was there ever any lack of evidence that Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, as well as Saddam's Ba'athist regime in Iraq, had flourished on US aid?

If 'true Islam' (as even radical Islamists would agree) holds the sword in one hand, and the book in the other, then Al-Qaeda and the Taliban (not to mention secular-turned-Islamist Saddam) have certainly carried the globalization of the Islamic zeal for militancy to its limit. The fact is, though, that Islam cannot thrive on the soil they have burnt, whether they represent the true or fake Islam. After all, the firepower of the suicide bomber is of little help in building a modern nation-state (which is the only form of modern collective existence that can be imagined). It could remain a potential arsenal for a life and death struggle for survival; but if the war is ever going to end, Islam will need to come to the scene with more constructive capacities.

To be sure, what has secured the thriving of Islam in the modern world is owed much more to the fast increasing number of its believers worldwide (through high rates of reproduction, migration, exile, and conversion) than to the spectacular actions of the would-be martyrs. In their representation as nation, community, and ethnic or social group, these growing Muslim populations, whether in Muslim-majority states or in Diaspora, are developing into modern Muslim publics, thanks largely to the emergence of a globally mediated public sphere. And it is the emergence of these growing Muslim publics that has been pushing an increasing number of the *ulama* and lay intellectuals in the Muslim lands, and in Diaspora, to endorse a different kind of Islam, one that does not hesitate to openly advocate peace, dialogue, and pluralism.

The emergence in Iran since the late 1990s of a trend away from the revolutionary ideology and religious militancy in the interest of 'religious democracy' is an example of the influence of this different reading of Islam. It is this new re volutionary-turned-reformist trend that now considers radical political Islam of the Sunni type a threat to Iran because of its geographic proxomity to Iranian borders.[1] In post-revolutionary Iran, Islam has certainly developed into a political and public force, which seems capable not only of involving politics, but also of playing the part of a civil institution checking the perennial phenomenon of unaccountable power, which has been so prevalent in the postcolonial Muslim-majority states.

The entry of political Islam into the public domain in Iran has certainly involved both a new militant posturing and calls for freedom, justice, and peace. While its militant spirit is articulated in terms of a radical critique of Western modernity (as a reminder of Western imperial domination), its emancipatory and egalitarian messages have inspired a public awakening with regard to the opportunities posed by the same modernity.

This dual representation of Islam has attracted attention on a global scale since September 11, 2001, but it has been around for much longer. At any rate, it should not have come as a surprise. After all, the dual representation of Islam is,

in essence, not much different to that of the West. The colonial West, not to mention the US-led Western alliance since World War II, has also displayed its jaundiced face time and time again, as a crusader for freedom and justice, and as a military power ready to repress non-conformance to Western (now mainly American) values with brutality.

This dual representation was in clear display in the reactions of the Islamic State of Iran to the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington. The initial reaction to the attack on the United States (by a force that was readily branded 'Islamic extremism') was one of discord and disorientation – to the extent that most Islamists here had to officially dissociate themselves from this attack, calling it a 'non-Islamic' act. But soon enough, the militant posturing raised its irrepressible head reminding everybody of the fact that the rhetoric should not lead them to lose sight of the fact that this militant posturing is part and parcel of the lived experience of Muslims. And that Iranian Muslims are no exception to this rule.

In this chapter, I wish to demonstrate how the September 11 attacks and the subsequent events are being absorbed by a state dealing with a crisis of legitimacy, and a nation driven by an internal dynamic to decide its future course of development. What makes this process peculiarly interesting in Iran is that it is taking place in the context of the concurrent emergence of a domestic and globally mediated public sphere. My premise is that the emergence of a religious public sphere in Iran is essentially a process marked by the simultaneous nationalization and globalization of Islam.

The public resurgence of Islam in Iran: the emergence of a religious public sphere

It took almost two decades before the religious revivals (flaring since the late 1970s) practically forced the secular intellectuals and even politicians (in both the West and non-West) to finally concede the political force of religion in terms of something other than 'backwardness' and 'irrationality'. Yet this recognition was often in the Huntingtonian term of 'civilizational difference', or more accurately, in terms of 'complete' versus 'incomplete' modernization; and alternatively – and yet narrowly – in terms of 'fundamentalism' and 'terrorism'.

Meanwhile, new generations of Muslim intellectuals have produced new religious discourses that tend to suggest new approaches to the problem of the West with Islam, which reflect the voices of the margin not merely as an outgrowth of modern history, but as claims to alternative or parallel histories. The Iranian 'religious intellectuals' surely belong to this category.[2] Whether, and to what extent, they will succeed in their endeavor is another matter, certainly out of the scope of the present discussion.

The renewed attention in the West to saving 'the free world' from a 'terrorist threat', or from 'the threat of weapons of mass destruction' – and the US-declared mission of bringing 'freedom to the oppressed' – surely needs an ideological justification; particularly so as these ends are to be achieved through

wars that seem to have no objective frontiers, but a blatantly religious language. This ideological justification is more likely than not to be sought in 'intellectual', let alone 'rhetorical', attempts (currently underway) at saving what is salvageable of the grand narrative of 'secularism' (even if this requires the abandonment of some of its principle premises). Had old secularism not supplied the ideological justification of the civilizing mission of Europe in its colonial conquests in the nineteenth century? Why should the new secularists shrug off the proud responsibility of giving an intellectual bent to the civilizing mission of the West in the postcolonial age, which is now to suit the process of globalization? The outcome of the project of revising the grand narrative of secularism to fit the requirements of the global age will surely prove crucial to how the problem of the West with Islam is reformulated and handled this time around. And this is sure to be also crucial to a new breed of Muslims worldwide.

Certainly, the attempt at re-evaluation of the secularization thesis is not a new venture. What is perhaps new here is the entry of this new breed of Muslims on the scene of this revision process, which is fundamental to the ongoing process of secularization. Not surprisingly, the entry on the scene of new players from the Islamic societies has added to the complexity of the task of revising secularism. New indigenous political and intellectual trends represented by native political activists and charismatic figures (in what has been established as the presumably 'traditional Islamic world') have brought in a new ambiguity to the ongoing process of secularization, both in their own societies and in the global domain. This ambiguity, by nature, is likely to both strengthen and weaken the secularization process. Notwithstanding the ambiguity, though, the new Muslim intellectuals are set to contribute, ironically, to resolving certain enduring paradoxes of modern thought (e.g., public–private, tradition–modernity, etc.). But these contributions (while often incorporating some notion of secularization) have posed a serious challenge to the ideology of secularism, and its defenders in Western academic, journalistic, and political circles.

Nonetheless, the public resurgence of Islam since the late 1970s has remained understudied. In Iran, at least, this is certainly the case. Here, more than twenty years after the victory of the Islamic revolution, there has emerged, almost in seclusion, a lively and highly contested public sphere, which cannot be but a significant consequence (intended or not) of the victory of the Islamic revolution of 1979. The scant attention to the development of a public sphere in Iran may be precisely due to its religious origin, which makes it an oddity given the assumption that the modern public sphere is a product of the modern processes of secularization. The emergence of Islam as a 'public religion' of political force is by no means limited to Iran; nevertheless, the Iranian case seems to be a novel example of how traditional religions 'continue playing important public roles in the ongoing construction of the modern world' (Casanova 1994: 6).

Yet Islam's contribution to the modern world may prove vastly different to what some liberal advocates of 'public religions' expect; surely, it is not a contribution made by a religion accepting 'the normative principles of a liberal public sphere'. The lack of attention to the reality of a non-secular, non-liberal, and

blatantly religious public sphere is still fueling ignorant speculations about Islam and its political nature.

This ignorance was put on full display in the US strategy to declare war on what President Bush called the 'Axis of Evil' (including a large Muslim population) in late January 2002, while the supposedly 'militant', and presumably 'evil', (Iranian) Islamists were calling for peaceful dialogue and debate. Particularly so, since the latter's effort in reaction to the US 'war on terror' was ostensibly directed at developing a 'rational' and 'universal' approach to the problem of terrorism (of which Iran claims to be a primary victim). No matter how sincere or hypocritical the Islamist call for dialogue and reason, it has won large degrees of public sympathy – and (thanks to the Europeans) not only of the Muslims – as against the untenable US strategy of 'going to war for peace'.

Notwithstanding the militant spirit inspired by Islam as a discourse of power, one cannot fail to appreciate that Islam in Iran has developed into a public religion whereby the modern concepts of 'subjective rights', 'human dignity', and 'social justice' have been taken for granted. What is more, it has offered to tackle the 'social and moral ills' of modern societies. New political trends and social movements here testify to the emergence of new Muslim publics that are increasingly aware of the essentially modern and global context of the Islamic revival. Moreover, these new publics are prepared to engage with problems of modernity as active protagonists at both national and global levels, even if such an engagement should require political, doctrinal, and cultural adaptation. The process of the rise of political Islam in Iran thus involves a concurrent nationalization and globalization of the religion. While the politicization of the religion is a product of previous movements for national liberation and cultural defense, it also serves as a motivational source for new political and religious movements with global claims giving modern dimensions to Islam as a traditional religion and culture.

The revolutionary revival of Islam in Iran, the establishment of an Islamic state here, and the relentless post-revolutionary attempts to shape Shi'ite Islam into a politically driven public culture have in many ways contributed to the actualization of the public and political potentials of Islam in the modern world. But, as already noted, these contributions are not exactly in line with what some new liberal theories of 'public religions' anticipated. Yet, indeed, the resurgence of Islam in Iran provides ample evidence in support of the rejection of the so-called 'secular' assumptions about the declining political power and public significance of religion, and its increasing privatization.

Talal Asad has been right in exposing the partiality of 'enlightened' intellectual attempts at saving the secularization thesis by simply conceding the continued importance of religion in the modern world (Asad 1999). Such concessions may not suffice in addressing the anxiety and fear of the religious believers in Islamic societies (like Iran) with the continued threat of the secularist ideology, now backed by outrageous military threats, to their religious and cultural traditions – though it may go a long way in addressing the moral conscience of the liberal proponents of the thesis.

In all clarity, the religious language adopted in the US war rhetoric is testimony to how the new battle-lines are being drawn in the context of already existing skirmishes. What makes many Muslims (from Africa, to the Middle East, to East Asia) read 'America's war against terror' as an 'American war against Islam' is that this war had been too well prepared to be a contingency plan adopted only after what happened on September 11. That the only choice made to deal with the problem with the Muslims was for war can tell even more about why some US politicians are so undisturbed, and even seem gloating at the prospect of what they could gain from such a war. For most Islamists, the war in Iraq is further testimony to the far-reaching diabolical plans of the United States in the Muslim Middle East involving a 'reshaping of the political geography of the region' in the interest of Israel.

Viewed from this perspective, the United States does not seem to be an innocent victim of a vicious attack by Islamic extremists; it may even have (knowingly or not) produced Frankenstein's monster. Was not the military zeal for conquest in Iraq encouraged, and even boosted, in the early 1980s by the United States (in the hope of containing what seemed to it at that time to be 'the greater threat of the Islamic revolution')? Even the Americans themselves have acknowledged that the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq was only to contain the Islamic revolution in Iran. But when Iraq became the major threat, then the United States developed the new policy of 'dual containment'. After September 11 this grew into a war against whoever is not with the United States. It should be obvious why the United States has been inclined to employ a religious rhetoric (most articulately voiced in the terminology of 'axis of evil'); the enemy is a religious force, if not a religion.

Since 9/11, 2001, it has been increasingly untenable for the liberal ideologues of secularism to maintain an impartial and non-ideological posturing in a condition that the exclusionary and even coercive domination of the Western 'bourgeois' public sphere by the modern secularist ideology is increasingly exposed. The liberal concessions (with regard to entry to the public sphere) to those religions that rely 'only on powers of persuasion' to address the moral conscience of their audience apply only to those religions that have already conceded the preponderance of the secularist ideology in the public sphere. In Iran, even before the Islamic revolution of 1979, Shi'ite Islam had never ceded the public domain to the secularists. Hence, there had emerged two opposing claims to public representation: that of the Shi'ite scholastic religious establishment, and that of the Western-oriented secular monarchic political establishment.

The continued political and public influence of Shi'ism (and its living representatives), on the one hand, and the failure of the modern secular state to advance valid claims to representation of the nation, on the other, were significant in hindering the emergence of a secular public sphere in Iran. Surely, the secular state of the Shah prior to the 1979 religious revolution, with its comunicative resources (e.g., national radio and television) and its censor of the alternative media (and what was considered subversive voices), was able to claim

virtual control of a reluctant public. But the scholastic Shi'ite *ulama*, with their spiritual, social, and financial connections with the community of believers, and with their control of the medium of the mosque, were able to pose real claims to representation of a consenting public at the grassroots level.

The challenge of the Islamists in Iran to the secularist ideology of the monarchic state has had serious implications for the development of political modernity here. It has certainly given voice to a thus far repressed history, namely the history of Shi'ism (i.e., the narrative of *Ahl-e-beyt* transmitted by the *hadith*), with potential to both challenge the universal history of modernity and to find a place in it. By reviving this repressed history and a curious appeal to Western intellectual tradition, Iranian Muslim intellectuals (including some Islamists) are trying to discern what made Iran a marginal outgrowth of a powerful and prosperous center of modern civilization. A significant aspect of such a project is the impetus to incorporate some of the most fundamental concepts of modernity (e.g., civil society and democracy) in light of an alternative (religious) history.

The new political and public efforts in Islamic Iran at redefining the Shi'ite faith is increasingly shifting toward making religion compatible with the requirements of modernity without questioning the ultimate domination of the public domain by religious values and principles. Here, the religious politicians and ideologues, having established control on the boundaries of the public domain through a popular revolution, are making gradual concessions to liberal and secular views.

By looking at political, social, and cultural efforts in Iran at redrawing the boundaries of the predominantly religious public sphere, one could develop a better understanding of the new developments in Shi'ite Islam (as both a public religion and a political culture) in the context of a modern nation-state. The role of mediated representation in shaping this public religion into the main element of 'nation-building' cannot be overemphasized. It has come to bear significant consequences for the relationship of religion, state, and nation, and for the redefinition of the boundaries between 'public' and 'private', 'openness' and 'secrecy', and 'individual' and 'collective'.

It is increasingly evident that the Shi'ite religious tradition is undergoing certain major transformations (as we speak) in terms of its public representation. But this process is difficult to discern unless Shi'ism is placed in the proper perspective of the construction of a religious public sphere, distinct from what is known as the modern Western (bourgeois) public sphere; and yet a public sphere that bears the indelible mark of its Western counterpart. There is no bourgeoisie (in its European sense) in the Iranian Islamic context, for example, and hence no liberal bourgeois public sphere; but the question of open and free public debate as the centerpiece of public sphere is as valid in Iran as anywhere else.

The construction of a Shi'ite Islamic national identity in Iran may thus be viewed as part and parcel of the process of redefining the boundaries of the public sphere. And yet this process has, in turn, implicated the search for national imaginary in ventures that have taken the Muslim clergy and lay

intellectuals to totally new domains, which require new interpretations of the faith involving the production of new religious forms and even new contents. And it is perhaps the neglect of the meaning of these innovations that has made the Iranian case, in the words of two *Washington Post* journalists, a 'quandary' for the United States.

Religious–revolutionary resistance to secularism

The revolutionary resurgence of Islam in Iran in defense of religious traditions, and its push to forge a uniform religious (Shi'ite) identity, have ironically contributed to the emergence of a differentiated public sphere, which is at one and the same time modern and traditional. In order to discern this process, one has to first understand how the politicization (and popularization) of religion is shifting the boundaries between public and private, on the one hand, and state and society, on the other. Here, one immediately finds oneself dealing, in particular, with the shifts in the religiously inspired political discourse of the revolution in the context of a mediated public experience of religion and politics. And this inevitably implicates the contributions of this experience to the emergence of a democratic turn in how religion is understood and how power is exercised in tackling the problems of a modern nation-state in a global environment.

The political and public force of Islam in Iran is rooted, more than anything else, in the symbolic, or cultural power, of religion in post-revolutionary Iran and the process of what may be termed 'symbolic exchange', which is best captured in the development of a religiously dominated mass communication. The symbolically based political power and public influence of religion in Iran is arguably connected at a fundamental level with the means of this symbolic exchange, namely the communication media (from the humble pulpit to high-tech technologies).

The main outcome of the Islamic revolution was a constitution, which made the state responsible, among other things, for creating a cultural environment where the religious believers (i.e., the Shi'ite believers) could practice their faith free from the intrusions of immoral ideas and acts. This was evidently a reaction to the modernizing, and yet authoritarian, efforts of the Pahlavi monarchy (1920–1979) that had allowed the presentations of irreligious symbolism to flood the public culture.

The revolutionary takeover of the national radio and television, the revival of the tradition of Friday prayer congregations, the introduction of Islamic punishments *qesas* (retribution), the veiling of the women in public places, were part of the program of standardizing a strict version of Shi'ite public morality. To this may be added the strict adherence (particularly since the victory of the Islamic revolution) to commemorating the cyclic events on the Shi'ite calendar (including the organization of mass ceremonies, publication of books and posters, production of films and television programs, etc., in the memory of the *Ahl-e-beyt*). On top of these, there have been a fundamental overhaul of history books in the interest of religious history and the introduction of a special

program of religious education as part of the mass education curricula, not to mention the closure of all bars, liquor stores, brothels, etc.

All this was organized and funded by the newly established Islamic state; but in doing this, the state relied on a pre-existing socio-cultural receptivity at the public level. The intent was to Islamize both the form and the content of the public culture. The public elements (already existing at a grassroots level) facilitated this systematic process of desecularization of the public sphere. The annual ceremony of Ashura (the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hossein) was the most popular along with the annual celebration of the birthday of Mahdi, the *monji*. But there were numerous other occasions on the Shi'ite calendar as well. In time, the takeover of the symbolic structure of the public culture was supplemented by a systematic institutionalization of the religious codes. The war with Iraq, which began in 1980, helped a great deal in creating an opportunity for the mobilization of media resources not only to the service of the popularization of the Shi'ite narrative, but also to the institutionalization of a militant reading of the faith.

Besides bringing certain traditional, and apparently declining, religious practices (e.g., standing vigil on certain nights of the year), the religious state organized and funded various institutions, events, ceremonies, research programs, exhibitions, community occasions, rituals, congregations, etc., to reintroduce the tradition of *Ahl-e-beyt* to the Islamic nation. For example, Imam Ali and Imam Hossein, the legendary figures of Shi'ite history, were introduced not only as the sources of spiritual emulation, but also as political and public figures with extraordinary human qualities, to serve as role models to the younger generation. These personalities were presented as practical models for the living of how to combine such qualities as free thinking, fairness, humility, and compassion, with decisiveness, sticking to principles, and even powers of coercion. Their sayings and tradition inspired not only stories, poems, films, and other cultural products, but also new battle cries for the Revolutionary Guards Corps and the militia (*Basij*) forces in war against 'external enemies and their domestic agents' on both military and cultural fronts.

With the wiping out of the bars, discos, and other 'hedonistic' public places, the mosques, with their loudspeakers broadcasting *adhan* and other payers, became the sole places for public activity in the neighborhoods. For example, during the war with Iraq, the mosques became both sites for recruiting local volunteers (*Basijis*) for war mobilization, and neighborhood centers for distribution of basic goods from foodstuffs to home appliances at cheap prices.[3] To be sure, the mosque remained, as always, a place of worship, but also increasingly an invaluable medium for the clerical ideologues and preachers of the official reading of religion to establish face-to-face contact with the community of believers on various religious occasions (occurring in cycles on the Shi'ite calendar). The television camera on these occasions would bring the religious propaganda and political agitation to the wider public. This became possible as the local production rapidly increased the numbers of TV sets in households after the revolution, and as the religious authority rendered watching television

halal (permitted) in a reversal of *fatvas* (religious edicts) that had considered it *haram* (sinful) under the monarchic regime.

National radio and television (renamed 'the Voice and Face of the Islamic Republic') were undeniably the most effective and far-reaching media, whose significance was recognized when they were granted independence from all ministries. The ultimate control of the Supreme Leadership, and the supervision by the representatives of the three branches of power, were an indication of an early recognition of the special qualities of the magic box. The television became, perhaps, the most influential means of giving new forms and even new contents to the articles of the faith. But this process has been an arduous, painful, and complex one, which requires separate attention.

The Ministry of Culture and the Arts was not only renamed the Ministry for Culture and Islamic Guidance (*Ershad*). It was also charged with the new mission of spreading Islamic culture at the public level. Before it became a major promoter of freedom of expression since the late 1990s, this Ministry was in charge of the censorship of printed publications (from the press to poetry), films, and all other literary or artistic productions. Beside the Ministry for Culture, various new government and non-government institutions took the responsibility for spreading both traditional ceremonies and a certain ideological interpretation of the Shi'ite ethical and moral codes, at the public level. These included the Islamic Propaganda Organization, the new bureaus for ideological inculcation in almost all government ministries and institutions, and an increasing number of community religious organizations.

To this must be added the educational institutions, and particularly the universities. Their significance was also recognized from very early on. It may suffice to mention that the whole enterprise of the so-called 'cultural revolution', beginning in 1980 and going on for many years after, was originated in the campaign to bring the universities, as a bastion of secularism, under religious control. The motto 'the unity of seminary and university' was initially meant to turn universities into something of a seminary, although this project was modified in time in new terms: 'the universities would incorporate the religious element', and 'the religious seminaries would be more receptive to modern science'. The printed publications, though, kept their traditional appeal to the intellectuals. A new generation of religious intellectuals, trained in both seminary and university education, began to emerge in the early to mid-1990s, who would add a new element to the public sphere, transforming its unitary form and opening up its restrictive boundaries.

The new intellectual interpretations of the Islamic tradition in Iran have been fundamental in allowing for cultural, social, and political critique within a public sphere defined by Islam. Yet one has to understand that the capacities of Islamic tradition for reinterpretation and innovation contributing to social and political critique are limited by constraints that the same tradition places on public debate and criticism. The role of a new intellectual movement, which has become vocal since the presidential elections of May 1997, is significant in expanding the domain of the public sphere by encouraging a public practice of negotiating the

Islamic symbolism under the rubric of reform. But, naturally, this is faced with resistance by the defenders of the entrenched official interpretation of this symbolism, who fear the 'unholy' implications of this movement of reform for the security of the established politico-religious order.

Notwithstanding its limited gains in institutional power since the May 1997 presidential elections, the so-called 'movement for reform' has created an intensifying public desire for 'civil society', as a site of political expression of the really existing social and cultural pluralities. The rise of public challenges to entrenched authorities via alternative interpretations of religion is certainly owed to this 'movement of reform'. The achievements of the reform movement in the public sphere aside, one must also note the sum contribution of the reforms to the consolidation of a new sense of religiously inspired nationhood. This clearly involves a gradual shift in the Islamic political–cultural discourse from 'the boundary-minded forms it assumed after the advent of European imperial expansion into Muslim lands to a more confident and differentiated internal and external dialogue' (Eickelman and Anderson 1999: 13).

It is in the midst of the new challenges to the political power of the Shi'ite scholastic establishment that the challenge of the Western secularist ideology, backed by the threats of a US military attack on behalf of a Western alliance, has again raised its irrepressible head. The challenge here is once again the challenge of modernity. Hence, the increasing recognition, even within the religious establishment, that the Shi'ite faith and symbolism cannot remain in the top political position, confident of the control of the public domain, in the isolation that would immunize it to the intrusions of political modernity.

This is, at least partly, a consequence of the fact that the secularization enterprise, which had served as the intellectual core of Western democracy in the nineteenth century, was constructed in the process of the complex relationship of Western colonial powers and the inhabitants of the non-Western (including Islamic) societies (van der Veer and Lehmann 1999). Evidence points to the fact that the whole expanse of empire, including both the West and the non-West, was the scene on which the secularization drama was played. The works of the secularist Iranian intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are clear evidence of the intense desire on the part of these intellectuals to fit Iran into the history of Western modernity. This was the case despite some serious theoretical and practical challenges that were posed to the intelligentsia by the defenders of the religious history of Iran. If this project was forcefully pursued in the constitutional revolution (1905–1911) and its aftermath, the rise of the Islamic revolution (1978–1979) marked its apparent reversal.

The renewed intellectual attention to the question of 'secularization' began in the mid-1990s after the publication of an article by the lay intellectual Abdolkarim Soroush, which was in fact a critique of 'Western secularism' if not 'the process of secularization'. Ever since, it was gradually recognized in the religious intellectual literature, and increasingly in open public debates, how central the secularization thesis was, not only to the self-understanding of modernity, but also to the search of traditional (religious) communities for a

'dignified identity' and 'national sovereignty'. Here one should also note the increasing influence of modern disciplines of social sciences on the new religious intellectuals. In fact, many of the new religious intellectuals tended to study sociology and political science in Iranian and Western universities, unlike the previous decades when engineering faculties were the breeding ground of the older generation of religious intellectuals.

In light of this new knowledge of the Western modernity a revision of the revolutionary movement of the late 1970s has already been underway since the late 1990s through public debate at multiple levels in an atmosphere where foreign intervention, except through willing and selective adoption of ideas, was absent. By references to the Western experience, a generation of new 'religious intellectuals' has been keen to develop a deeper understanding of the revolutionary experience than that offered by the clerical ideologues. President Khatami's writings, preceded and followed by numerous books, essays, articles, dissertations, etc., by other religious intellectuals dealing with similar themes, were a clear indication of this new trend.[4] By taking a comparative perspective on the rise of new, religiously motivated, social and political movements in both the West and the non-West, Iran's new religious intellectuals have been trying to make the religious challenge to secularism a force to reckon with, not in militant terms, but in intellectual terms.

The impact of September 11: war on terror or war on Islam?

The September 11 attacks on New York and Washington and the subsequent American threats against Iran came at a time of heated debate and serious political competition between the two main factions, namely 'reformists' and 'conservatives', which were now deployed along institutional lines. The 'reformists' had taken the elected institutions such as the Parliament (*Majlis-e Showra-ye Islami*) and the presidency as their stronghold; whereas the 'conservatives' had kept control of the Council of Guardians (*Showra-ye Negahban*), which checked the parliamentary legislation, and the judiciary, with its power to prosecute and punish the reformists. The consequences for 'the project of reform' of what is increasingly seen as 'America's war on Islam' could be significant. It has provided both the 'conservatives' and 'reformists' with opportunities to advance their countervailing causes.

But one thing is clear: the warmongering strategy of President Bush has created an indispensable opportunity for the further development of political and public capacities of Islam. Such a development is set to contribute to further popularization and hence democratization of political Islam. But it does not seem to serve the cause of what the United States promotes as democracy. For Iran, the rise of a Muslim public is increasingly an impetus to frequent references to democracy and human rights in Iran's foreign policy vis-à-vis the aggressive posturing in the US war rhetoric. (If successful in convincing the religious public of the democratic merits of Islam, the Iranian Islamists believe that

Muslims could then even find more effective means of resisting and even foiling US designs against them.) But for the United States to cope with the rise of the new Muslim publics worldwide, it will demand increasing rates of sophisticated policy making, perhaps a fundamental overhaul of how Islam has been understood and treated so far (what has so far been unfortunately lacking).

In order to clarify how the September 11 attacks and their repercussions have been received in Iran, one needs primarily to contextualize these in the mediated environment of public debate and opinion making that has come about in Iran in recent years. The efforts by the Iranian Islamists subsequent to the September 11 attacks are a clear indication of how the project of building an Islamic nation-state in Iran has to come to terms with global incidents of enormous proportions. The bellicose rhetoric of President Bush in his State of the Union address on January 29, 2002 (placing Iran on the 'Axis of Evil'), which led to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in a matter of one year, has made the task ever more difficult.

As already noted, Iran had to deal with the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington and their repercussions while engaged in heated debates over a plethora of political, cultural, social, and economic issues. The issue of 'security' was one example of the sort of topics debated just before the attacks. It followed from increasing reformist pressure on the political establishment for democratization, pressures that were deemed by the conservative faction threatening to national security. The judiciary and the Council of Guardians were the primary target of the reformist critique, as they were sending the reformist journalists and activists to jail, as well as blocking legislation that would lead to more political openness (and hence to a decline in conservative power).

Calls for respect for civil liberties, legal protection for freedom of expression, creation of new job opportunities, and a fairer distribution of wealth notwithstanding, worrying statistics about crime, prostitution, and other 'illegal and immoral acts' were also deemed threatening to national security. The conservative media took the usual line of attributing the political and moral crises to the American cultural invasion, and the judiciary, the police force, and the hard-line vigilantes were urged to combat 'the domestic agents of the enemy' who were accused of trying to corrupt the society. A new crackdown on the reformist journalists and activists was about to begin on charges of 'disturbing the mind of the public', 'posing a threat to national security', and 'insulting religious sanctities'. Naturally, 'the agents of moral and cultural decay' would not be immune to this crackdown.

Meanwhile, the conservative judiciary launched a campaign against violations of Islamic laws bent on reviving the practice of 'implementing Islamic punishments in the public'. The argument was that such an approach to punishment would intimidate those who might harbor designs for law-breaking and immoral acts. By contrast, the supporters of the opposing so-called 'reformist' faction argued that the Islamic punishments 'were not meant for revenge, nor for the destruction of the culprit', and that 'the main objective was prevention of social corruption' (Ayatollah Amini 2001).

The conservative propaganda peaked when less than two weeks before the September 11 attacks (on August 30) a clerical advocate of the so-called 'conservative' faction (a former Minister of Intelligence), Hojjatoleslam Dorri Najafabadi, enraged the reformists after he had admired the Taliban for 'providing security for their people' (Najafabadi 2001). As a critic of the reformist agenda of President Khatami, he used his speech in a Friday prayer congregation in Tehran to question Khatami's government for its so-called policy of *tasamoh* (tolerance). He criticized the laxity of the government with regard to 'subversive' and 'permissive' elements that were 'poisoning' the cultural atmosphere and 'destabilizing' the political system.

President Khatami had bragged about his efforts to legitimize (despite all ambiguities) what he called 'tolerance of the critics' since his victory in the 1997 elections. The relatively open political atmosphere since 1997 was surely used (and even abused) by the conservative critics of Khatami as much as (if not more than) his supporters. But the president was adamant that *tasamoh* and *tasahol* (non-violence) were at the heart of the social and political teachings of Islam, and that 'violent and reactionary views had no bearing on the truth of Islam' (Khatami 2001c). He thus insisted that his critics would be tolerated, hoping that this would serve as a model to conservative hard-liners urging them to also tolerate their critics. Responding to conservatives calling for Taliban-type domestic security, Khatami only said in a press conference on September 1:

> We want neither a Taliban type security, nor a Taliban type Islam. … We have tried to offer a fine image of Islam based on spirituality and democracy, which could serve as a role model for the Muslim world. It would be too dangerous now to take the Taliban's Islam as our own model.
>
> (Khatami 2001b)

And according to a reformist cleric, Nasser Qavami (also a Member of Parliament), those who sought a Taliban-type security wished to bring a Taliban-type government to power in Iran, otherwise, 'the Taliban had brought no security to Afghanistan' (Qavami 2001).

Ten days after this episode, New York and Washington were attacked, striking almost everybody with shock and awe. As already noted, the initial reaction of Iranians to the attacks on the United States, was one of discord and disorientation – to the extent that most Islamists here had to officially dissociate themselves from these attacks, calling them 'non-Islamic' acts. Iran's initial sympathy with Americans as 'victims of terror' came despite the fact that the earlier US support for the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, and for the Saddam regime during its war with Iran in the 1980s, was common knowledge in Iran. The national television and the printed publications gave wide coverage to the official condolence message sent by President Khatami to 'the American people', although the Iranian president carefully omitted the US government as the recipient of his message.

Even the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, known for his staunch

anti-American stance, came out (after a silence that lasted for a few days) in 'condemnation of terrorism in any form'. Although he was critical of the US strategy to go to war against 'terrorism' without either defining what the term meant and consisted of, or producing any evidence of the guilt of the targets of attack. In the Friday prayer congregations all over the country, the orators followed the Supreme Leader in giving sermons whereby the United States was cautioned and invited to 'self-reflection'. On September 25, 210 Members of the Iranian Parliament expressed sympathy with 'the victims of terrorist attacks on America'.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Leader called on the United Nations General Assembly (and not the Security Council) to take the lead in the campaign against terror. He was particularly keen to call on the Organization of Islamic Conference to take an active part in the anti-terrorist campaign. Insisting that Iran was itself a victim of terrorism, for which it had had to pay a high price, he invited first and foremost a clear definition of terrorism. Yet he announced that Iran would not take part in any anti-terrorist coalition that was led by the United States, and called on the 'Muslim nation of Iran' and 'Muslims all over the world' to close ranks in anticipation of future threats from the 'enemies of Islam'. Later developments attracted an increasing number of statesmen of the Muslim countries to somewhat side with Iran distancing themselves from an American 'war on terror'.[5]

The effort at fomenting a united front of Muslims (on both domestic and international scenes) in reaction to the American 'war on terror' was certainly an indication that the Iranian Islamists were sensitive to the perils of this war. For them, this war signified nothing short of an American push to launch 'a new political and communicational crusade against Islam'. This fear became even more intense when the United States waged war in Afghanistan. The war in Iraq was an additional cause for concern as it held the prospect of the application of the idea of 'regime change' to other countries of the 'Axis of Evil'. The careful politicking of the Iranian leaders with regard to the threats of the United States certainly signifies concerns about global threats to Islam. But surely, the concerns with global threats to Islam are also tied with concerns about what is seen as threats to 'national interests'.

Ironically, references to 'national interests' in Iran had, for some time, had a dampening effect on trends of support for global Islamist militancy bent on hatred of the United States. Since the 1997 presidential elections, to be precise, which brought the reform-minded junior cleric Mohammad Khatami to popularity and prominence, Iran had tried to present the 'civil' side of Islam in calls for 'civil society' and 'religious democracy'. Even the Americans had somewhat acknowledged the development of 'positive trends' in Iran. For some time, Iran seemed even to have been accorded a slightly less belligerent status, at least in some US policy and media quarters, than Iraq and North Korea, which had been high on the list of Washington's 'rogue states'. But the bellicose US strategy has steadily created cause for Iranian Islamists to take a hard-line approach to the United States as a threat to both Islam and Iran. The appeal of Iranian

Islamists to diplomacy, international law, human rights, peace, and dialogue since the American declaration of 'war on terror' has been focused on forming a united front of Muslims, both domestically and internationally, in opposition to US belligerence. The war in Iraq has certainly given the Iranian Islamists more reason to pursue this objective.

On the international scene, the task of forming a united front is made difficult by the divisions in the Islamic world. Iran's active politicking has been not only clearly aimed at overcoming the discord and disorientation on the domestic and international scenes, but also 'to make the threat into an opportunity'. Since the declaration of the 'war on terror', this has included intense lobbying in the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), and the convening of several conferences attended by politicians, religious leaders, academics, journalists, and activists from Islamic countries. Many other symbolic and political moves (at both state and public levels) could be added to this list. The initial results indicate both a further incorporation of 'Islamic Iran' into the Arab Muslim world and a relative pacification of the internal divisions.

Domestically, calls for a united front are advanced by the political and religious leaders of a nation divided by countervailing forces of militancy, associated with the traditional notion of 'religious honor' (*gheyrat-e deeni*), and resistance and détente, associated with the modern notion of national sovereignty and international law. The so-called conservative political faction that represents, broadly, the radical tendencies of political Islam in Iran, certainly advocates a militant posturing vis-à-vis the United States. This is certainly the position of the conservative-controlled media, including national radio and television, and the leaders of Friday prayer congregations nationwide.

The conservatives have practically gone on an offensive against the reformists, who present a less belligerent, if critical, view of US movements in the region. Accusations of complicity with the 'Great Satan' abound against the reformist journalists and activists, who until not long ago had been on a free ride of electoral wins at the expense of the unpopularity of the conservatives. But the aggressive US strategy has, surprisingly, not led to a tightening of the grip of religious and political hard-liners on power, nor even to a reversal of the calls for democratic reforms. If anything, the internal dynamics are weighing in the interest of further expansion of the public sphere in the interest of marginal and even critical voices of 'civil society'. The voices of warmongers on the Iranian side have been attracting diminishing public interest, while the presence of political analysts (advancing educated critiques of the US strategy) on the media scene (from the pulpit to the Internet) is on the rise.

An Iranian intellectual, Bijan Khajepour, told the *Guardian* in March 2002 that although President Bush's 'Axis of Evil' speech 'handed Iran's hard-liners a propaganda coup', the reformists did not lose the plot altogether, and even went on an offensive of their own in their calls for democratic reform (Khajepour 2002). Ever since though, the reformist offensive have been effectively countered by the conservative invocation of 'resistance' to America's belligerence. But as already noted, the calls for democratic reform have not silenced.

Generally speaking, both over- and underestimation of the democratic claims of reformists could prove misleading not only for outsiders, but even for themselves. An Iranian reformist journalist and activist, Hamid Jalaipour, for example, was quoted by the *Guardian* in March 2002 as expressing joy with the endurance of his new newspaper *Bonyan* vis-à-vis conservative crackdowns (Jalaipour 2002) – 'Issue 26 and we haven't been closed', he said. Jalaipour was also quoted as saying: 'Iranian society has moved from a mass structure to a pluralistic one. The hard-liners don't have enough social ground any more.' But Jalaipour's joy did not last for long as *Bonyan* was in fact shut down in April on charges of subverting Islamic rule. Subsequent developments proved that the conservatives still commanded a powerful influence, but to the credit of Jalaipour, this was not powerful enough to stem the tide of the reform movement.

The main conservative ploy to rein in the reformist campaign for democracy has been to brand the reformists as allies of the United States. The US military attacks against Afghanistan and Iraq have provided ample opportunity for the conservative media to publish editorials condemning the emptiness of US claims to democracy and human rights, and question the support of local reformists for an US-type democracy. Nonetheless, the reformists keep insisting that the best way to counteract a possible US attack is 'to enhance the system's legitimacy by expanding democracy' (ibid.).

Examples of real gains for the reformists are few, but significant. For instance, despite the attempts of the religious hard-liners to force Iran's National Security Council to declare a state of emergency vis-à-vis President Bush's threats against Iran in his 'Axis of Evil' speech, the Council drafted a (reformist-led) national plan for reconciliation. The reformists have also been trying ever since to revive a bill to give amnesty to all political detainees (who are predominantly reformists). Although this has not been successful and a few more of the reformist activists have since in fact been sent to jail on charges of threatening national security, the conservative judiciary has been under pressure to be more lenient than before in its treatment of the reformist activists.

The Bush 'Axis of Evil' speech has apparently not damaged the campaign for internal reform as much as first seemed likely despite repeated comments by US officials on the defeat of reforms in Iran,[6] and discredited their anticipation of a radical popular turning against the conservatives in sympathy with the United States. In fact, both reformists and conservatives have played the US war threat in their own interests. For instance, while the reformists have been trying to justify negotiations with the United States as a move serving Iran's national interests, the conservatives have so far succeeded in pushing the desire for negotiation with the United States out the political agenda, calling it a threat to national security.

The issue of negotiation with the United States is a clear example of how local politics has been played out since the September 11 events. The issue came up seriously after the Bush 'Axis of Evil' speech in January 2002, and it has been a thorn in Iran's foreign policy ever since. Shortly after the US attack on

Afghanistan, an editorial in the newspaper *Azad* emphasized 'the need for refraining from ruling out talks' with the United States (Firuzabadi 2002). In March, the reformist-dominated *Majlis* (Parliament) followed the reformist press to seize the moment for establishing some sort of official contact with the US government by reacting positively to a proposal by a US Congressman (Joseph Biden) for talks between the Members of Parliament of the two countries. The debate over the relationship with the United States raged further when the results of an opinion poll indicated that a majority of the public would support contacts with the United States. But in May the Supreme Leader reserved no harsh words in dismissing any form of contacts. Ayatollah Khamenei came out in open and harsh attack against those who promoted official negotiations with the United States, accusing them of being devoid of 'religious honor'.[7]

Although after this forceful dismissal the issue of negotiations with the United States was left in silence for some time in deference to the Supreme Leader, the US war on Iraq created a new opportunity to again raise the matter as an issue of national interest versus an issue of national security. Just before the US military operation against Iraq began, the powerful head of the Expediency Council, Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, told in an interview with an academic journal that the issue of relations with the United States was not a matter of religious principle, as Ayatollah Khamenei had put it. He said rather that the issue was a matter of 'political expediency' to be decided either in a referendum or by the Expediency Council. Yet he was courteous enough to give the final approval to the Supreme Leader.

All things considered, despite the differences between the conservatives and the reformists, the increasing seriousness of the 'American threat' after the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq has pulled the two factions somewhat closer together in calling for the complete withdrawal of US troops from the region. Evidently, Bush's 'Axis of Evil' speech gave both sides of Iranian politics reasons for a kind of unity focused around the shared feeling of being insulted. Indications are that Iranians in general have also been outraged by the US threats although some of the fierce critics of the religious government still cherish crazy fantasies about the prospect of a US attack against Iran leading to the overthrow of the 'hated mullahs'.

The sense of public outrage was such that the organizers of the nationwide demonstration celebrating the anniversary of the Islamic revolution in February 2002 made an unconventional appeal even to the opponents of the regime to express solidarity with the nation against 'Bush's insult against the Iranian nation'. In response to Bush's statement whereby Iranian political authorities were categorically dismissed as 'non-elected' and 'unpopular', the Iranian officials went out of their way to emphasize the high place of the electoral process in Iran's Islamic politics. The continued US war threats created the right political atmosphere for yet another show of anti-American sentiments, which were expressed in the rallies on the anniversary of the revolution in February 2003 not long before the US military venture in Iraq began.

Iranian Islamists: condemning, and yet accused of, terror

Not surprisingly, the public reactions to the September 11 attacks were diversified in this nation of more than 70 million. On the official level, the reactions ranged from sympathy for the United States to sympathy for 'anti-American struggles of the oppressed'. The two main types of political Islam were in clear display here. Yet there were also spontaneous expressions by the secular middle class. In September just after the incident in the United States, a crowd that had gathered in one of Tehran's busy streets proceeded with a silent march holding candles in sympathy with the victims of the 'terrorist attack'. Meanwhile, an editorial in one leading reformist paper, *Nowruz* (run by the head of the National Security Committee of the Parliament, Mohsen Mirdamadi), brought the idea of an 'anti-terrorist coalition' into question, posing a number of what it called 'logical' questions:

> What is the meaning of terrorism? Is the attack on the Pentagon a terrorist act? If so, then why are the attacks against the Palestinian institutions and the assassination of the Palestinian leaders (by the Israelis) not categorized as terrorist acts? Is terrorism a specifically American problem, or is it a problem of global proportions? If it is an American problem, then why should other countries be mobilized and pay for it? And if terrorism, like drug trafficking, is a universal problem, then why must America decide its course and destiny?
>
> (*Nowruz* 2001)

The editorial of one of the conservative papers (published by a group running a *madrasa* in Qom under the tutelage of the hard-line Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi) was much harsher in its comments. The editorial of *Feyziyyeh* (entitled 'crime and punishment') said:

> What for years Hollywood was trying to create in the genre of science-fiction movies in order to entertain the American people has now become reality in an ominous fashion. Yet there is a big difference between the fiction and the reality. In the Hollywood movies, some kind of superman would always come to the rescue in the last moment, unfolding the conspiracies and defeating the enemy; but in the real story neither the supermen, nor the high-tech intelligence and military machines, were able to even anticipate the enemy's operation. … The American leaders … whether they attribute this operation to elements beyond American borders, or to an internal conspiracy, will have to admit the beginning of the end of the myth of American invincibility. … This audacious act was in fact a punishment for American crimes worldwide, in Hiroshima, in Vietnam, in the occupied Palestine, and in Iraq, the Sudan, Lebanon, Somalia and Iran.
>
> (Feyziyyeh 2001)

In time, with the intensification of US threats against Iran, the Iranian officials took a tougher stance against the US government. In his tour of some European countries in March 2002, even the moderate outward-looking President Khatami took a strong position against the United States. He even went as far as predicting that 'America will one day include even Europe in its Axis of Evil'. Reuters (reporting on Khatami's European tour) cited President Khatami as calling for all foreign troops to withdraw from Afghanistan. 'A region in development does not need the presence of military forces. It needs solidarity,' he was quoted as saying. Khatami also said that the United States was using the war in Afghanistan to consolidate its position as the world's only superpower. He added:

> After September 11, America is trying to use the situation to impose its own views and get rid of all obstacles in order to be the exclusive superpower. If this continues, America will include Europe in the 'Axis of Evil'. … They will [also] add China and Russia [to the axis of evil] and the world will move toward a terrible war.
>
> (Khatami 2002a)

Nonetheless, President Khatami insisted repeatedly that: 'Iran is still committed to its policy of détente in the face of pending threats to the world from warmongers.' Actually, Iran had good reasons to be accommodating with regard to the US war in Afghanistan, as it has been with regard to the war in Iraq. If anyone apart from the Afghans and Iraqis themselves had a good reason to cheer the annihilation of 'the networks of terror' in Afghanistan, and the fall of Saddam in Iraq, it was the Iranians. After all, Iran was a primary victim of the Taliban's and Al-Qaeda's terrorism, and Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Iran had not yet forgotten the massacre of its diplomats by the Taliban in 1998 in Mazar-Sharif, and the Iranian victims of Iraq's chemical weapons in the 1980s are still perishing by the day. Otherwise, there was little doubt about US involvement in the victimization of Iran. And if there were any doubts, the statements of a former Saudi diplomat in January 2002 washed them away. According to Mohammad Al-Otaibi, a former Saudi ambassador to Afghanistan, in an interview with the London-based Arabic paper *Al-Hayat* (cited by the local press): 'Americans initially supported the Taliban in order to put Iran under pressure' (Al-Otaibi 2002). The Americans have also admitted that they had supported Iraq in its war against Iran in the 1980s because they saw a greater danger in the revolutionary Iran to US interests than in Saddam's Iraq.

Nonetheless, Iran played, in diplomatic jargon, 'a positive role' in the UN-sponsored conference in Bonn, Germany, which pieced together Afghanistan's post-Taliban government in early 2002, and followed up with concrete offers to help Afghanistan's reconstruction, to the tune of $600 million. Iranians have good reason to also contribute to peace and stability in Iraq, as they have repeatedly declared. As if all this was not enough to prove the goodwill of Iran toward American-controlled Afghanistan and Iraq, the Iranian government refrained from meddling with the internal affairs of these countries after their occupation

by US forces. After the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan, Iran even introduced visa requirements for the citizens of the Gulf states, ostensibly to prevent the entry of Taliban and Al-Qaeda members into Iranian territory, just as the United States had wanted. And after the launch of the US-led attack on Iraq, Iran did not allow the Iran-based Iraqi opposition armed forces to enter Iraqi territory, again just as the United States wanted. But the bellicose US strategy has not matched the Iranian official overtures. Certainly even ordinary Iranians, let alone the officials, expected a better deal from the United States.

The confrontational mood on the part of Iranians was shaped and nourished by the mediation of the American war rhetoric in a matter of few months. The commentaries in the press, which had been predominantly (but with few exceptions) critical of the attackers, calling them 'terrorists', began to blame the United States for what had happened there. The conservative commentators offered an analysis of the event whereby sympathy for the loss of human lives was overshadowed by conspiracy theorizing developed around two main themes. A grand conspiracy theory speculated that the whole project of the attacks had been designed either by domestic anti-state elements, or by an Israeli–American coalition. The other theme discounted the possibility of a premeditated design, but stressed the design of a contingency plan by the right-wing Jewish and American elements to take advantage of the situation for quelling radical Islam.

With regard to the US war threat, 'unity' and 'solidarity' were promoted as the official positions of all factions, as the opinion polls indicated the public preference for this option. According to opinion polls taken in March 2002, a majority of the residents of the capital city, Tehran, considered 'unity' and 'solidarity' as the most effective public response against a possible US military attack on Iran (*Iran* 2002). These opinion polls also indicated an emphasis on 'the people's presence on the scene, resistance, and defense'. Interestingly, the citizens of Tehran were predominantly of the opinion that the best government response to American threats was 'to keep the citizenry happy' by adopting effective policies in addressing the social and economic problems of the people. Other solutions suggested by the public included establishing relations with the United States, and/or mobilizing resources to defend the country: 'Some 81 per cent believed that the people did not want to enter a war with the U.S. but, if such a war occurred, they would defend the country.' While the Tehrani citizens generally underestimated the possibility of the world community supporting the United States in any attack on Iran, they were confident that the Islamic countries would support Iran: 'About 68 percent of the respondents said that an American military attack on Iran would be a disaster. And some 81 percent suggested that the existing problems should be solved through political methods rather than on the battlefield.'

A reformist Member of Parliament, Majid Ansari, said that Iranians would close ranks to confront US threats if US leaders' aggressive overtures against the Islamic Republic take a turn for an attack. 'Our stance is based on restraint and détente, but if we are threatened by America, the Iranian nation will face up [to any attack] in an integrated rank,' he told a group of mourners at Ayatollah

Khomeini's mausoleum in the south of Tehran (Ansari 2002). Meanwhile, a leading conservative cleric (addressing a crowd in the city of Isfahan) fended off President Bush's 'Axis of Evil' charge against Iran along with Iraq and North Korea. 'The Iranian people are not intimidated a bit by Bush's and American threats,' said Ayatollah Abolqassem Khaz'ali.

Several military chiefs also vowed strong resistance in the event of an attack amid US officials' accusations against Iran. A Revolutionary Guard commander said that Iran would stand up to enemies with force and defend the country. 'We are not seeking a war, but we will stand up against the enemy should the need for defense arise,' the chief commander of the naval forces of the Islamic Revolution's Guards Corps, Brigadier-General Morteza Saffari, said in the ancient city of Shush in the oil-rich Khuzestan province.

The Iranian political and religious leaders and activists have, nonetheless, been careful not to antagonize the United States while maintaining their critical position vis-à-vis US support for Israel. Shortly after the inception of the US attack against the Taliban's Afghanistan, the Minister for Intelligence, Ali Younesi, announced in a speech to the seminarians in the Qom Seminary that Iran would not interfere with the US attack against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, though he also requested the Americans to honor Iranian national sovereignty.

This careful politicking has also been the case with regard to the US attack against Saddam's Iraq. Not only did the Iranian leaders stand by their policy of not getting in the way of the Americans in Iraq, but they did not conceal their joy on the fall of Saddam, and understandably so. Yet even so, the Americans have not been satisfied and still accuse Iran of interference in both Afghanistan and Iraq. After all, without much effort, Iran wields astonishing political influence via religious influence in both countries – more so in Iraq than in Afghanistan due to the Shi'ite factor.

Given the economic significance of Iraq (based on oil) which Afghanistan lacks, the Iranian political and moral influence is understandably worrying for the United States even without Iran needing to rely on military intervention. The actual call by Iran for the withdrawal of the 'forces of occupation' from Iraq, echoed also by the Iran-based Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution of Iraq (SCIRI), has risen also from Iraqi Shi'ite believers in their millions in peaceful religio-political anti-American rallies.

Much to the dislike of the Americans, with their fantasy of being cheered for liberating the Iraqi people from Saddam's dictatorial oppression, Iraqi Shi'ite believers gathered in Karbala in late April 2003 to express their resentment at the presence of infidel US troops on sacred Iraqi soil. Millions gathered from all over Iraq in response to a call from the leader of the SCIRI, Mohammad-Baqir Hakim, who came to Iran as an exile more than twenty years ago after his father, a high-ranking Iraqi Shi'ite scholar, was killed by Saddam for pro-Iran sentiments. They gathered to mourn the death of a celebrated Shi'ite immaculate imam chanting slogans in support of Islam and in rejection of both Saddam and US troops.

Iran's call for peace and democracy versus Bush's 'America is at war' message

The very claim of Iran's democratically minded Islamists (including President Khatami) is to create a different kind of (a truer) democracy, which cannot flourish unless it returns to a religious moral order. The idea is certainly less than novel. The liberation theologians (particularly of the Catholic persuasion) were the latest to criticize the irrationality of liberal claims to secular impartiality, and the disastrous moral consequences of the hypocritical claims of the modern secular state to defend 'freedom of conscience' and 'freedom of expression' as the main pillars of democracy. But the Islamist practical efforts in Iran at introducing democracy as a religious value are certainly novel. Particularly so, as the Islamic liberation theologians in Iran have, unlike their Catholic counterparts, had the opportunity to actually take charge of the management of a modern state. This is certainly a novel phenomenon, regardless of whether, or to what extent, the Islamist claims to democracy are genuine.

In an article posted on the Internet by Iranian writer Saeed Vaseghi (2002), a comparative perspective of the contradictory quests of Iran and the United States for democracy was presented. 'If the recent U.S. threats and actions damage the development of new democratic structures in Iran,' he wrote, 'then it will not be the first time that Iranians' efforts to build a democratic system have been set back by foreign intervention'. Referring to the US-backed coup against the democratically oriented government of Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953, he questioned the sincerity of US claims to advancing democracy in other countries. Vaseghi noted:

> It can be argued that Iran has a stronger claim to a democratically elected government than the United States. Iran's President Khatami has been elected by an overwhelming majority of Iranians for a second term. In contrast, there is some controversy on whether President Bush won a majority of the votes in the U.S. election.

The author pointed to the sharp contrast between President Khatami's efforts to find common ground between different or opposing international interests by pursuing his idea of dialogue among civilizations, on the one hand, and the US unilateral and militaristic approach to problem solving, on the other. Besides, he recounted numerous examples of 'US double-standards' evident in its rejection of greater reliance on diplomacy and negotiations. The US consistent disregard for the authority of the United Nations and for international treaties, its 'terrorist' campaign against Nicaragua, its backing for undemocratic regimes in the Middle East, and particularly its support for Israeli atrocities against the Palestinians, were offered as examples of US double-standards. The author then went on to say:

> Iran is now firmly on the learning path of development of democratic institutions and a pluralistic culture based on the realities and complexities of its own social traditions and political history. Iran has a long way to go, but it is on the right direction. In Iran there are passionate debates at all levels of the society, and most notably in the press, the parliament, and the government between various forces of conservatism and the progressive forces of modernization. … These political forces happen to reflect the texture and the realities of the Iranian society. These debates are a necessary learning process as part of the development of a culture of pluralism and democracy in Iran, a process that was so often interrupted by those who do not consider a democratic Iran in their economic interests.
>
> (Ibid.)

The contrast has become more salient as the US push to start a war in Iraq evidently diminished the trust of the world public, let alone the Muslim public, in the seriousness of the Bush Administration in promoting democracy in the world while crediting Iran's earlier allegations about American hypocrisy. As a result, the Iranian Islamists claim, Iran seems to have come out of the political wilderness enjoying the sympathy of the world's public opinion, while the United States seems to have been isolated and condemned for its defiance of 'collective wisdom'.

The combined anger and ridicule of the Iranian Islamists for what they call 'US double-standards' is difficult not to share when one takes note of American positioning with respect to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, an issue highly sensitive to Iranians, and to Muslims in general. This is exacerbated even more since the United States claims to be playing the role of an impartial peace broker in this conflict. In late June 2002, for instance, President Bush, in his long-expected speech about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, said that he did not trust the existing Palestinian leadership because it was 'compromised by terrorism', calling for a new leadership that was not 'compromised by terrorism'. But this meant, in both American and Israeli political language, a green light for the Israeli occupation of all that was earlier agreed even by the Israelis as Palestinian land. How could Palestinians get a new leadership that was not compromised by terrorism under the occupation of the Israeli troops, their imminent enemy, was a question that apparently never occurred to President Bush. Unless of course, he had complete confidence that only under such occupation can such a leadership take shape.

The situation was not much different in the aftermath of the recent war in Iraq. The American promise of a 'war of liberation', which was meant to bring to the 'oppressed Iraqi people' the chance of deciding their own political destiny, has met its logical, and yet hypocritical, conclusion. First a US military governor, and then an American civilian, were appointed to rule Iraq as long as necessary. Their main mission, according to Iranian Islamists, is to prevent the creation of another Iran. Iranians point to US claims to give Iraqis a chance to rule themselves while at the same time denying the Iraqis an immediate chance to decide

their future. US political leaders would argue, of course, that the Iraqis are not yet ready to decide such a significant decision. Iranian leaders, on the other hand, point to the political maturity of the Iraqis, to a large class of learned scholars of religion with moral influence on the public, and to the vast number of highly educated middle-class Iraqis, as a reservoir of potential leaders of the future.

As a sign of the political maturity of Iraqis, Iranians also point to orderly and peaceful religious ceremonies, held by the Shi'ite majority in the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala. There, the demonstrators called for an immediate withdrawal of the 'forces of occupation', and for the formation of a 'popular government' via free and open elections. The position of the United States has been made more difficult as some Sunni religious leaders and even the Kurds, allied with the United States in the military phase of the operation 'Iraqi Freedom', have sympathized with the Iranian proposal. Iranians had also pursued diplomacy in unison with the world in order to prevent the outbreak of war in Iraq in the first place. They even worked with Muslim countries neighboring Iraq to find a peaceful solution to the Iraqi crisis, whereas the Americans defied the world by accepting no alternative to war.

On the international scene, such developments have made it possible for the Iranian Islamists to appear as advocates of 'true democracy' (i.e., a 'religious democracy') as against what they call the American 'hypocritical claims' to democracy. The now official policy line of 'dialogue between civilizations' found firmer ground when it was adopted as the theme of a joint gathering of the European Union and the OIC in Istanbul in the wake of George Bush's State of the Union address. President Khatami had already set the stage for the promotion of his idea of 'dialogue between civilizations' in an address to the General Assembly of the United Nations:

> The day Iran proposed the idea of dialogue between civilizations to the General Assembly (in early 2001) few would anticipate that in such a short span of time this idea would become so imperative for world security, and so vital for saving the world from a terrible war.
>
> (Khatami 2001a)

Iran's propaganda against US disregard for human rights and international law, and condemnations of false claims to democracy, continued unabated, and even intensified with the start of the US-led military attack against Iraq. Iranian officials and most editorials in the press took heart from the anti-war and anti-American rallies worldwide to go as far as branding the United States the most dangerous terrorist power and the most frequent user of weapons of mass destruction.

Speculations about a Zionist plot

While speculations about the identity of the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks on the United States were going on, Iranian national television screened a local production in which the attack was portrayed as a 'Zionist plot'. The attack was seen as a ploy in order to create an environment for 'the brutal suppression of the Palestinian resistance against the Zionist occupation'. The film began with a scene of a UN-sponsored conference in Durban, South Africa, where, on September 3, 2001, the representatives of some 3000 non-governmental organizations from around the world signed a document declaring Israel a racist state with a record of 'war crimes, genocide, and ethnic cleansing'. Then after a dramatic turn of events, the film ended by revealing a grand conspiracy designed by the extremist Zionists and some ultra-right Americans to hit the United States, each for their own diabolical purposes.

The Zionists were placed at the center of the plot. Taken aback by the loss of the credibility of their claims to victimization, they plotted the September 11 attacks to achieve certain ends. First, they would shift the attentions of the world public from their crimes against Palestinians. Second, they would arrange the scene of their crime such that the Muslims would seem to be the culprits. Third, with the image of Muslims tarnished as a bunch of brutal terrorists, the Zionists would be given a free hand in doing what they wished with the Palestinians still resisting the occupation of their land. And finally, the Americans would stop putting pressure on the Zionists to make peace with the Palestinians, and would turn against the 'Muslim threat' thus making the world a safer place for Israel.

The film was only one example of a wide range of speculations among the public, and in the media, about an Israeli connection to the September 11 attacks. This was an added component to previous efforts at equating the strategy of Israel in repressing the Palestinian resistance and in dealing with its enemies, in general, to 'state-sponsored terrorism'.

Since 1948, the question of Palestine as a Muslim land, and its occupation by the Jews, has always raised sensitivity in Iran. But since the Islamic revolution of 1979, 'the need for the liberation of "the honorable Quds" ' (as the place of ascendance of the Prophet Mohammad to heaven, or *mi'raj*), and the animosity toward the 'Zionists', have been commonplace. To that extent the Iranian Islamic revolutionaries who deposed the monarchic regime in the late 1970s have succeeded in time to make any talk of compromise with the Jewish State a religiously loaded political taboo. The intensity of 'anti-Zionist' propaganda was such that the moderate trends in Palestine (including even the Arafat faction) were denigrated for their preparedness to recognize the Jewish state (based on the 1948 occupation of Palestinian land) and for the return of not even the whole of the 1967 occupied territory.

It has become an entrenched tradition in post-revolutionary Iranian politics to see the ceding of even one inch of Palestinian territory, let alone recognition of the state of Israel on the Muslim territory, as a sellout of Muslim lands and a violation of Islamic values. Making a compromise decision over 'the sacred land' has thus been considered beyond the authority of Palestinians alone. The posi-

tion of Iran was thus always too radical to allow for the recognition of the so-called peace negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. And its propaganda against the peace negotiations was always targeted at the sincerity of Israel in making a 'just peace', and at the eligibility of the United States as an impartial referee.

For the Iranian Islamists, since Ayatollah Khomeini called for the annihilation of the Jewish state after he took power in Iran in the late 1970s, Israel has been characterized as a 'cancerous tumor' and a 'source of corruption'. Moreover, it has always been the most important ally of the United States in the war for the destruction of Islam. But, interestingly, the public debates raised since the mid-1990s, and particularly since the 1997 elections, created an atmosphere in which alternative views about how to deal with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict could be raised, although very painfully and sometimes at high cost. The September 11 events made these talks even more open. In fact there arose three major points of view: the official view, the revisionist view, and the hard-line view.

The official view was expressed typically by President Khatami in an address to a conference on 'the media of the Islamic world in support of the Palestinian Intifada'. The main theme of this conference was to study the ways and means to give voice to the 'Palestinian resistance' against 'Zionist aggression' in the new conditions created in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. The conference was thus aiming at counteracting the Western (and particularly American) media, which were believed to have sided with Israel in silencing the 'Palestinian voice'. In his address, Khatami called for the creation of a 'war crimes tribunal' in the occupied Palestine by the United Nations. He also called for a 'fund' set up by the OIC to finance the Intifada. According to Khatami:

> The Intifada of the Palestinian oppressed nation is not to be characterized as violence and terror; for it is, in fact, a struggle against violence and terror; and for this it must be commended. … The unity of the Islamic world is neither unrealistic, nor merely a matter of political expediency. It is rather a real, humane and moral affair, which will benefit the whole world. … I declare here that every Muslim condemns violence, terror and violation of human rights, not least because he/she is a Muslim. … Zionism has endangered peace and stability not only in the region, but also in the whole world. It has violated the basis of dialogue and understanding between nations and religions.
>
> (Khatami 2002c)

The revisionist view, on the other hand, was discussed at a conference on 'Palestine: an Iranian view' held in Tehran in December 2001. The young jurist Mohsen Kadivar's views (presented in a talk given to this conference) were typical of alternative views on how Iran should deal with the Palestinian question:

> Our question today is whether or not some have made the support for the Palestinian cause a pretext for dampening the domestic problems. … Only the Palestinian people can decide on their own destiny. If they decided on the Intifada as the way to liberation, we should support them; and if they chose the diplomatic option, we should support them all the same. … We don't have the right to dictate our solutions to the Palestinian people, nor to make decisions on their behalf. We don't have the right to outpace the Palestinians in their struggle. … The Palestinian question is first and foremost a national question. … [And] religion is secondary [to that]. … The first priority is the realization of security and the right to life for the Palestinians. … The Palestinian question is a national question before it is a religious question. … Over the past 23 years our view of the Palestinian question has been based on an ideological discourse. But considering the new developments in Palestine and the changes in the Palestinian people, we need to revise our view.
>
> (Kadivar 2001)

The hard-line view carried the core of typical conspiracy theories. An example of this was reflected in the views of the editor of a hard-line monthly *Imamat* in an interview published in the hard-line weekly *YaLesrarat* in late September 2001. Mohammad-Ali Ramin said in his analysis of the September 11 attacks:

> The enormity and complexity of this event was such that one cannot pinpoint one or another renegade group as the only culprit. For one, the operation must have been carried out under the support and guidance of people with supreme intelligence on the American soil. … For another, the perpetrators must have had insider information about the security services. … The only elements in America capable of these are undeniably the Jews.
>
> (Ramin 2001)

Asked how the Jews would undermine their staunchest ally, Ramin replied: 'There are historical precedents for such acts. For example, in the year 64 AD, the Jews, in their hostility with the Christians, convinced the Roman Emperor (Nero) to put Rome on fire and blame it on the Christians.' Asked about the motivations of the Jews in taking such an action, he retorted:

> I see the Intifada as the source of all this. In the anti-racism conference in South Africa, thousands of NGOs condemned the Zionist regime and found Zionism tantamount to racism. This was unprecedented, as the Jews had previously attracted the sympathy of the world public opinion for their alleged victimization. The crimes of the Zionists against the Palestinian Intifada had finally begun to turn the tide of the public opinion against the Jews. … Therefore, the explosions in America could serve as a distracter in the interest of the Zionists. Clearly today hardly anybody in the West takes a

> serious position against the Israeli crimes in Palestine. And meanwhile, the Jews sit back and watch the confrontation of Islam and Christianity.
>
> (Ibid.)

The speculations about a self-hit involving 'the Zionist entity' came to a head with references by Iranian officials and the media to statements made by a US presidential hopeful, Lyndon LaRouche. An article posted (in March 2002) on the web site of the weekly journal *Executive Intelligence Review* (founded by LaRouche) <http://www.larouchepub.com> under the title 'Iran Blows the Lid off America's Reischtag Fire Lie' covered this development, and was quoted widely by the Iranian media and even some prominent politicians. As the article said:

> Looks like Iran is the first country to formally start questioning the mysterious events of September 11, and hence of the real agenda behind America's War of Terror. …. And no amount of rhetoric about 'conspiracy theorizing' is going to silence this truth.

In 1999, LaRouche had already raised anger in some quarters in the United States when as a candidate running for the US Senate he said:

> We are making a big mistake to think that the people out there hate us for our support of democracy and human rights. It will be a self-deception to ignore the lasting impressions of our crimes on the present generations of Japanese, Vietnamese, Iraqis, Palestinians (and others).

The radio station Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran (English language) went so far as to conduct a phone interview with LaRouche (on March 4). In it LaRouche elaborated in some detail his reading of the nature and significance of what he called 'the attempted coup d'état' of September 11. He even named some figures prominent in the faction around the former US National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, including the political scientist, Samuel Huntington, and the former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. He was keen to add that these men 'are promoting a clash of civilizations'.

The interview was aired four times in one week (and a Farsi summary circulated throughout the press) both in Iran and internationally via satellite transmission. The story also appeared (on March 9) in the English-language daily *Tehran Times* (and in the vernacular print media), as well as on national radio and TV news programs. The *Tehran Times* web site reported:

> A U.S. Presidential candidate in the 2000 [and 2004] election, Lyndon LaRouche, has said that the September 11 terrorist attacks had been organized by rogue elements inside the U.S., and were aiming to use the incident to promote a war against Islam.
>
> (*Tehran Times* 2002)

In his interview with the Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, LaRouche claimed that the attacks on the United States (which claimed more than 3000 lives) were organized by American and Israeli elements (who were trying to promote a war). He also called the Israeli regime a dictatorial regime and said that Tel Aviv was prepared to commit Nazi-style crimes against the Palestinians.

Among top officials citing the LaRouche was Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, formerly a powerful president of Iran and currently the Chairman of the Expediency Council. In fact, Rafsanjani used the occasion of Friday prayer congregation in Tehran to invoke LaRouche in support of his own speculation about the plans of the United States and Israel for expanding their dominance in Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Middle East. Noting the US attack on Afghanistan, he said: 'If the intention was to protect the Afghan people and to save them from poverty and misery, that would be a desirable thing; but all available evidence indicates that there are other objectives behind this presence' (Rafsanjani 2002). 'The objective is to pave the way for launching a war against Islam and Muslims,' he went on to point out.

But Rafsanjani, wise politician that he is, was keen in his sermon not to antagonize the United States. He said 'we are not at war with America. We hope that the Americans will not commit the blunder and get their hands stained in a war [with us],' he said, cautioning the Bush Administration that 'the outbreak of war in the region would not be of any benefit to the aggressor nor to the victim' (ibid.). He concluded by emphasizing the importance of the unity of all sectors of Iranian society, something that, as already noted, Bush's 'Axis of Evil' formulation had indeed assisted.

Another top official citing LaRouche was Hassan Rowhani, Iran's Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council. He was also an advisor to the President, a representative of the Supreme Leader, a member of the Expediency Council, and a member of the Assembly of Experts. In a keynote address delivered to an international conference convened in Tehran (on March 9), he referred to LaRouche's analysis to accuse the United States of moving in the direction of a new 'Roman Empire' (Rowhani 2002).

The conference was sponsored by the Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS), a think-tank connected with the Foreign Ministry. The September 11 attacks were a primary topic of the speakers from the Persian Gulf and Asian countries. In his address to the conference, Rowhani noted that the September 11 attacks had initially produced a new picture of the American people, as 'a people that had been wronged', and expressed regret that this image did not endure due to the subsequent belligerence of the US government.

Rowhani said that the United States could have reacted by addressing the reasons for popular resentment around the world with respect to US policies; 'for example, by launching a new international Marshall Plan to eradicate poverty and injustice in the world' (ibid.). This would have won 'the hearts and minds of the populations of the world,' he added. The United States could also have taken legal steps to bring the perpetrators to justice, according to international law, by presenting evidence of the guilt of the accused; but 'when asked for

evidence, President Bush said that now is the time for war, not evidence,' he noted. He then characterized a third option adopted by the Bush Administration: 'misrepresenting the act of terrorism in order to achieve the goals of a new doctrine of U.S. and Israeli dominance in the Middle East'.

Rafsanjani and Rowhani are two top Iranian officials who, in the past, had even been seriously concerned with improving relations with the United States despite Iran's long experience with US hostility. But like other Iranians, they had certainly sensed something fishy about 'the 9/11 scenario' right after it happened. Their invocation of someone like LaRouche in support of their premonitions could of course be for seeking allies at a time of increasing pressure from the United States. But they could have also sensed that September 11 was in fact the point of no return for the United States, and that its 'war on terror' was, in fact, the long-feared 'war against Islam'.

The Afghan and Iraqi connections

There have been numerous speeches, commentaries, and policy statements reflected in the Iranian media since the September 11 attacks, mostly critical of the belligerent US strategy, and yet stopping short of inviting an attack. During the bombing of Afghanistan by the Americans, Iranian television was quick to send reporters to Afghanistan. This was the first time the Iranian media covered a war in another country. They covered, in particular, the destructive consequences of the air bombing for the civilian Afghan population in the cities and villages, some of which had been wiped out as a result of the US bombing campaign. A conference of Islamic media organizations was held to discuss the coverage of 'the Afghan plight'.

The coverage of the war in Iraq has been even more effective and wider in its scope. It has certainly been unprecedented in terms of the time allocated, the number of reporters sent to the location, and the number of analysts and experts interviewed. That the Iranian-sponsored satellite news network Al-Alam has made deep inroads into post-Saddam Iraq in terms of attracting a large audience has been acknowledged by a recent report in *The New York Times*. The intent of the Iranian media since the war in Iraq is to give voice to a looming 'anti-occupation movement' centered around Iraq's Shi'ite population, but including supporters and sympathizers from all other religious and ethnic persuasions. The main motive of this movement is said to be the protection of Iraq's independence, territorial integrity, and national, cultural, and religious interests. The programming for the domestic audience has been designed to raise social and political consciousness with regard to US threats to Iran after the United States is finished with the business in Iraq.

All in all, it is increasingly evident that the developments in Iran and their external influence have already created a new quandary for the United States in the Middle East, and particularly as far as Iran's influence on Afghanistan and Iraq is concerned. According to an article in the *Washington Post* published not long after the war in Afghanistan:

> Viewed last fall as a potential ally in the U.S.-led war on terrorism, Iran is presenting an increasingly complex problem for the Bush administration's anti-terrorism policies in Afghanistan and the Middle East, according to U.S. officials and analysts. … Iran's influence in Afghanistan has grown since President Bush said Tehran was part of an 'Axis of Evil', with senior U.S. officials charging that Iran is subverting the U.S.-backed interim Afghan government and providing refuge to Al-Qaeda and the Taliban fighters.
>
> (Pincus and Loeb 2002)

However, the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, in his visit here in February 2002 thanked Iran's religious and political leaders for their humanitarian assistance, and signed agreements promising cooperation between the two countries. Iran has also been commended by the United Nations for hosting millions of Afghan refugees, who had fled 'the Taliban terror, for several years'. During Karzai's visit, Iran's president, responding to American accusations about Iran's sabotage of Afghanistan's security, said in no uncertain terms: 'Iran's national security is tied with a safe, peaceful and progressive Afghanistan' (Khatami 2002b).

Given all this, it should be obvious what Iran would want in Afghanistan. A local journalist put the question 'What does Iran want in Afghanistan?' to the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister, Mohsen Aminzadeh, in December 2001 by. He retorted:

> We want peace in Afghanistan. What can secure our interests in Afghanistan is peace and security. … Most of the security problems in our border provinces are associated with the problematic situation in Afghanistan. We are neighboring a land that had sheltered the most vicious outlaws one could imagine. … Apart from this, there is the problem of refugees. … Notwithstanding our humanitarian efforts to give refuge to 2.5 million refugees who have crossed to Iran as a result of Afghanistan's hostile environment, we cannot ignore the social and economic problems associated with accommodating such a huge population of foreign citizens. … Therefore, we want a responsible government in Afghanistan, which is capable of governing this country in a way to improve the life condition of the Afghan people. … As long as the best standards of living in Afghanistan is worse than the worse standards of living in Iran, we will continue to have a refugee problem. … We are after a sustained development in Afghanistan. An extremely poor neighbor is naturally a cause for insecurity, political instability and huge economic costs for our country. Thus, we have every reason to play an effective part in the economic, social and political development in Afghanistan.
>
> (Aminzadeh 2001)

The article in the *Washington Post* (2002, op. cit.) also noted examples of the complexities the Bush Administration has been encountering with regard to Iran's influence in Afghanistan:

> One illustration of the complexities confronting the Bush administration as it considers Iran's role in Afghanistan involves Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a onetime Afghan militia leader who is a vocal opponent of the U.S. presence as well as the Karzai government. The Iranians closed Hekmatyar's office in Iran, where he had lived in exile for five years, shortly before Karzai arrived in Tehran on Feb. 25, 2002. The Iranians then ordered him to leave the country. He reportedly tried to go to Iraq and was said recently to have crossed into Afghanistan.

Yet according to a senior US official, the Bush Administration was mixed in its view as to what the Iranians should have done with Hekmatyar. 'Some officials thought he should have been turned over to Afghan authorities, while others said it would have been better for the Karzai government if he had been kept in Iran, but under house arrest,' the article said. 'The administration's uncertainty over how to react to Iran's influence in Afghanistan – even when it is aimed at buttressing the Karzai government – and in the Middle East reflects a broader problem in U.S. relations with Tehran,' the *Washington Post* noted.

The same, if not more, complexity is a feature of Iran's influence in Iraq. The US authorities keep accusing Iran, this time, of subverting US military rule in Iraq, while the charges of backing terrorism and developing nuclear weapons have not abated. The US officials in the White House, the State Department, and the Pentagon also continue to accuse Iran of providing support, including arms transfers, to Palestinian rejection groups and Hizbullah of Lebanon. And this at a time when British Foreign Office officials have repeatedly praised Iran's role in the Iraqi crisis.

The real problem, though, may lie in the fact that the United States feels there is a serious challenge posed by Iran to its influence in both Afghanistan and Iraq. According to the *Washington Post* article, 'the Administration officials say Iran's growing influence could hinder U.S. efforts to stamp out terrorism and shape the country's post-Taliban direction'. The Director of the CIA, George Tenet, for example, said: 'The initial signs of Tehran's cooperation and common cause with us in Afghanistan are being eclipsed by Iranian efforts to undermine U.S. influence there.' But the *Washington Post* points to expert opinions whereby 'Iran's influence should come as no surprise, given that it shares a 600-mile border with Afghanistan and a long history of relations.' Moreover, the article cites some analysts who say, 'given the scale of Afghanistan's problems after more than two decades of war, the United States should not stand in the way of Iranian assistance'.

Similar arguments could be made in the case of Iraq, only more forcefully, given that there are more deep-seated historical, political, religious, and economic ties between Iran and Iraq. As to what Iran wants in Iraq, the answer

may be even more clear cut than in the case of Afghanistan given the security threat that is still felt after the Iraqi invasion of Iran in the early 1980s, which developed in an eight-year war that was never officially ended. UN resolution 598 provided only for a ceasefire calling for further negotiations over the border disputes between the two countries, the issue of war reparations, the destiny of the POWs and MIAs, and other issues. None of these issues, except for the ceasefire that came into effect in 1988, has been ever resolved. Naturally, Iran would be concerned about the sort of government that would rule Iraq after Saddam given that, at the end of the day, the two neighbors will have to deal with these outstanding issues one way or the other.

The other main concern of Iran in Iraq pertains to the question of the vast Shi'ite population there, as well as the question of the management and upkeep of the Shi'ite shrines and *madrasas* in the cities of Najaf, Karbala, Samara, and Kazemain. There are naturally economic concerns as well pertaining most significantly to Iraq's oil, and particularly the impact of the flow of Iraqi oil onto the world markets on the price of oil on which Iran's economy is dependent. The remarks by some US officials about a plan for building a pipeline to take Iraqi oil to Israel, or about the possible withdrawal of Iraq from OPEC, are naturally sensitive for Iranians.

Conclusion

The American 'war on terror', not to mention the American so-called 'war of liberation' in Iraq, read (not only) by Islamists as 'America's war on Islam', could have only damaged the cause of democratic development in the Muslim world – though one finds no sensible argument against that fact that only such a development could provide the best guarantee of dealing with 'terrorism' at a fundamental level, or serve as a sound basis for political freedom.

'Axis of evil' or not, the Iranian nation consists of a diversified public whose opinions are increasingly affecting the course of political development here in the interest of democratic reforms. The American warmongering strategy has little to contribute to this process. If it was not for the powerful internal dynamics associated with the development of a public sphere, Bush's strategy 'to go to war for peace', combined with Sharon's strategy to 'out-terrorize the terrorists', would have even destroyed the whole process of democratization in Iran. This is a not too unfamiliar experience, given the history of the democratically oriented government of Mossadeq in the early 1950s.

The appeal of Iran's new religious intellectual movement to civil society and freedom of expression may in the last analysis be tied with political attempts to save the Shi'ite faith and its revolutionary-based political and public force from what is seen as the threat of secularist ideology. By turning the post-revolutionary religious culture into a public culture, the movement is seemingly trying to create a social space where religiously inspired republican virtues would produce a religious nation.

Prominent political and religious figures (like President Khatami) can invoke

their scholastic background in Shi'ite jurisprudence and theology, as well as their background in modern science, to find religious legitimacy for the modern concept of civil society. It is hoped to be a public space where citizens of the Islamic nation can enjoy their 'natural rights' to 'freedom of expression' and 'equality before the law'.

Yet these innovative endeavors suffer from an inherent contradiction that is not unfamiliar to the Western tradition. On the one hand, these intellectual efforts involve incorporation of such secular concepts as civil society and democracy into the Islamic discourse and symbolism in order to give them religious legitimacy. Yet on the other hand, in order to avoid criticisms that point to the secularist consequences of their innovations, the religious intellectuals find it necessary to anchor these secular concepts in the imaginary of an Islamic nation.

This concept of Islamic nation is, at one and the same time, rooted in a religious history and symbolism that had characterized the original Islamic political community, and directed toward a universal political community (*umma*) that is to come with the return of the *monji* (savior) of the human world. And yet this concept is problematized when the reformist efforts to reconcile the religious history with the universal history of modernity is contradicted by the conservative guardians of the religious history who fear the loss of their religious–cultural identity to Western political and cultural hegemony.

The invocation of a religious nationalist rhetoric in reformist literature is what unites the reformists with the conservative *ulama*-in-power (who would find no better formulation for an Islamic *umma* than an Islamic nation). Yet the contradictory tendencies in this religious nationalism to either incorporate or resist the secular history of the nation, simply by claiming an Islamic history for the Iranian nation, have already become the source of serious religious disputes and political conflicts.

The source of the problem, as Asad has suggested, may lie in the fact that nationalism, despite its appeals to religious symbolism and ceremonials, is not formed by religion. Nevertheless, one may argue that modern nationalism is the consequence of the ultimate need of political communities in modern time to establish themselves within the structures of a modern state.

Despite its modernity, the modern state is anchored in the cult of community whose collective power it is to embody. And what feeds and nourishes this community cult better than a community religion? Thus while one could agree with Asad that nation needs a worldly history, one could also argue that a particular worldly history that could advance claims to truth is best fed by a religious tradition carried by a living religious community. Iran's living Shi'ite community cannot but have a worldly history, yet a history that often refuses to be presented as an appendix of Western modernity.

The revolutionary move of Islamists in Iran since the late 1970s to claim the whole of the public domain successfully, banishing the secularists from even insignificant public spaces, was a clear response to the secularist exclusionary enterprise of the previous decades. In its systematic secularization of the nation,

this enterprise had denied the religious publics even a theoretical acknowledgement. Thus the construction of a Shi'ite Islamic national identity in Iran may be viewed as part and parcel of the process of redefining the boundaries of the public sphere.

It is in light of this mediated public experience of religion and politics that one could appreciate how a revolutionary movement in defense of religious traditions has contributed to the emergence of a public sphere, which is at one and the same time modern and traditional. One can also appreciate how the politicization (and popularization) of religion is shifting the boundaries between public and private, on the one hand, and state and society, on the other.

The shifts in the religiously inspired political discourse of the revolution have, in turn, contributed to the emergence of a democratic turn in how religion is understood and how power is exercised in tackling the problems of a modern nation-state in a global environment. Yet just as the appeals to nationhood have proved problematic even in liberal democracies due to the heterogeneity of the public, the process of 'nation-building' in Iran by Islamists has also had to deal with this 'notorious' diversity.

The examples of this diversity are reflected in the multiple expressions in the mediated public sphere. They range from the voice of a martyr-to-be (on an Internet site) who announces his readiness for Jihad to the voice of a religious reformist who searches (in his newspaper editorial) for the religious roots of democracy. In between there are other voices: the voice of a frustrated man (on a phone help-line) who wants to commit suicide due to acute depression, for example, or the voice of a woman who consults (on live television) a therapist about her problems with her husband and young children. There is also the voice of a Friday prayer leader who preaches (from the pulpit) about parental responsibility in controlling the sexuality of their kids, not to mention the voices in Diaspora (using the Internet) to promote the prospect of a secular Iran. Of significance here is the diversity and complexity of such expressions, and the attempts of all these people to extend their presence in the religious public sphere by appropriating Islam for their own purposes.

The transformation of Shi'ite Islam (as the faith of individual believers) into the main element of the cultural identity of an emerging nation-state has certainly had a transforming effect on the nature and functions of the faith, and the culture associated with it, in both doctrinal and practical terms. Moreover, this transformation is a product of a period which saw the doubling of the population and a staggering rise in education, information, and high-tech communication.

Yet Shi'ite Islam has certainly performed as more than a passive object of change. The rise of the Shi'ite *ulama* to political power and the transformation of Shi'ism from a community religion into a 'public religion' (equipped with discourses and institutions of power) have, in turn, played a significant role in dealing with the new economic, demographic, technological, and intellectual challenges. This process has involved the emergence of a public culture and a

political environment where religion, nation, and state may after all strike a working balance.

My view of the role of a religious public sphere in Iran is shaped precisely by the new forms of public representation in a political context constituted by religious symbolism, which have emerged since 1997 in both affirmation and condemnation of political modernity. The characterization of the seemingly contradictory notion of 'religious public sphere' is the main focus of my thesis.

The believers have not stopped going on pilgrimages, to congregate in mosques for prayers, or to hold private religious sessions out of personal and private choice. But there has emerged a new powerful public element (with access to huge economic, political, institutional, and communicational resources), which has set out to bring religion to the people (no matter how willing or reluctant they are) via television, ceremonials, exhibitions, and all sorts of public enterprises.

Taking a comparative historical perspective, one cannot fail to recognize the imminent challenge of a Protestant-type reformation in the Shi'ite faith for its living representatives, i.e., the scholastic *ulama*, on the one hand, and the religious–reformist intellectuals, on the other. The emergence of a modern and young nation (and its very much 'secular' worldly desires) from a religious reformation is what makes the developments of Islam in Iran peculiarly similar to how the imaginary of nation was born in the Christian West.

Yet if it has become increasingly difficult to discern the roots of the modern 'secular' nation-state in peculiar codes of morality of particular religious communities, the living case of religious reformation in Iran displays the direct and indirect, open and secret, links between religion and nation. These links, though, are to be discerned in the context of a religious, and yet diverse and differentiated, public sphere.

Right before one's eyes, one has the case of a religion producing the secular as a condition of its own continued worldly significance. Yet it is, perhaps, in the nature of religions to provide a rationale for the existence of the secular, as it is in their nature to provide a rationale for committing sin. Obviously, the power of religious faith in enabling the 'true believers' (living in a 'sinful secular world') to restrain from committing sin is demonstrated fully only in a condition where the opportunity for committing sin is available; that is, the immediacy of a secular world is already taken for granted. Religion, as such, has already opened itself to the possibility of a sinful life in a secular world, because this also gives it its strength.

Faced with increasing and diverse populations of multiple and complex demands, the Shi'ite religious authority in Iran is increasingly forced to withdraw from certain important areas of social life (where it has performed miserably) without completely disappearing from the scene. It continues to exert influence; but in time it may have to do so through less open and often secret operations.

The significant characteristic of Protestantism, which gives it a universal aspect, intellectually engaging even after centuries for the protagonists of Islamic reformation in Iran (and, I suppose, elsewhere in the Muslim world), is its

fundamental contribution to the emergence of calls for 'religious pluralism'. Religious pluralism, though, is not an external disinterested regulatory system that gives no religion a privileged position with respect to others. It is rather an internal system of balancing a plurality of moral claims, each with its own strict adherents or non-attached observers. In such pluralism, the constant tension between belief, secular reason, and sin is on full display in symbolic, or cultural, exchange at the social level.

In this sense, reading the religious intervention in political and public life in such a way as to have a case of confrontation between utilitarian rationality and religious irrationality is to impoverish our understanding of the (religious) sources of our modern secular way of understanding the world. I would argue (based on my observation of the development of Islam in Iran) that 'utilitarian worldliness' can live alongside religious standards of thinking and behavior, and even be enhanced by them.

It was once a truism that the modern secular nation-state was born out of free and open public debate in the context of a civil society from which religion was banished into the private space. A free and open public sphere and the banishment of religion to the private spaces of secrecy were the main elements of a political environment where public opinion could be presented as that of the nation. The consent of the nation to the disciplinary power of the state would then be considered indispensable for the legitimacy of power.

Yet this connection of state and nation in the public sphere of civil society often concealed the operation of another disciplinary power structure: that of religion. Despite its privatization (and perhaps because of it), religion has continued to play an underlying, but fundamental, part in shaping the imaginary of the modern nation. Secret pseudo-religious societies in Europe (e.g., the Freemasons) were no less fundamental in shaping the public opinion of national interests than the bourgeois intellectuals and their printed publications.

The emergence of a religious public sphere in Iran is a clear indication of the public and political role of religion in transforming an originally sectarian religious community into a national political community. It also displays both the open and secret influences of religious reform on the course of other main elements of political modernity: that is, the capitalist developments, the scientific and technological developments, and the educational and communicational developments.

Whereas the media (from the pulpit to the Internet) are increasingly shaping the expressions of the public (hence the sense of absence of a non-mediated public sphere), the exercise of power only partially relies on public opinion, represented (or made) by the media. Secret or obscure religious societies, associations, schools, and organizations, and even some private religious circles, families, and personalities, are fundamental in determining the overall moral order that determines, in turn, what is to be made public and what is to be kept secret.

But as we all are human (all too human), total control of us in all our diversity, complexity, and intrigue is as impossible in Iran's religious public sphere as it is in the Western liberal public sphere. In the West, the liberal advocates of secu-

larism have had to allow the religious believers (who rely on their powers of persuasion alone) re-entry to the public domain. Just the same, the tolerant Islamists will be likely to open up the public space to the secularists (who accept not to transgress the 'red lines' of the public religious culture).

Surely, the challenge of religious reformation for the course of religious and national development in Iran has become public only since the late 1990s; nonetheless, it was always there in a secret, but tense, religious and political contest, between countervailing religious and political tendencies. Its development into a public matter of national interest has become possible only after the broad contours of the public domain, with its exclusion–inclusion criteria, were agreed upon; although this has remained subject to questioning, negotiation, bargaining, and manipulation.

Not unlike the Western bourgeois public sphere, the Shi'ite public sphere in Iran is a domain of public debate, which is neither completely free nor completely open, and yet capable of providing a space for the expression of a diversity of voices. Not surprisingly, some of these voices are heard to an effect, some are heard to little or no effect, and some are repressed.

A gathering of a group of Iranian writers and intellectuals on the Island of Kish in the Persian Gulf (off the coast of Iran) was an example of the peculiarity of the process of democratic reform in Iran. 'President Bush may list Iran as part of an "Axis of Evil", but writers and intellectuals on this dry and weedy coral island, 25 miles south of the mainland, say democracy may yet thrive in their country,' writes Andrew Lamb, a short-story writer for *Pacific News Service* (Lamb 2002).

Surely censorship is still in operation in Iran at various levels; so is secrecy and concealment of truths from the public. But this should not come as a surprise to the inhabitants of a liberal public sphere either, especially in matters of politics – though in the Iranian case matters of religion should also be added to this off-limit domain in the name of sanctity. Nonetheless, most of the thirty writers and intellectuals at the gathering in Kish agreed that 'recent years have delivered a strong and steady push toward social liberalization,' wrote Lamb (ibid.).

Noting the disappearance and even murder of some Iranian poets and writers in 1998, a woman participant at the gathering was quick to say to the reporter: 'I hope you are going to say something nice about Iran. We are not evil.'

Notes

1 Border provinces such as Khorasan and Baluchistan in the east bordering Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Hormozgan and Bushehr in the south on the coast of Persian Gulf, with their Sunni ethnic populations, could be fertile ground for recruitment by radical Sunni Islamists.

2 The Iranian religious intellectuals include clerics like President Mohammad Khatami, Mohammad Mojtahid-Shabestari, Mohsen Kadivar, etc., and lay intellectuals like Ataollah Mohajerani (former Minister of Culture), Saeed Hajjarian, Abdolkarim Soroush, etc.

3 During the eight-year war with Iraq, basic goods were in shortage and traded on the black market at exorbitant prices.

4 For example, Khatami's book *From the World of the City to the City of the World* was a review of the development of Western political theory. In another of his books he explored the historical roots of despotism in Iran advancing a criticism of the 'narrow readings' of religion as a factor contributing to 'oriental despotism'.
5 A conference convened in late March 2002 in Malaysia in pursuit of a clear-cut definition of terrorism indicated an emerging unity in the Islamic world that the Iranian Islamists had been pursuing.
6 The Director of the CIA, George J. Tenet, for example, said in March 2002 to the US Congress that Iran's political reform movement was losing steam.
7 This came after revelations that an unofficial mission (ironically by some moderate conservative elements) had been carried out in contacting the Americans.

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7 September 11 and after

Pressure for regulation and self-regulation in the Indian media

Manoj Joshi

The September 11, 2001, attack has been seen as a watershed in modern times akin to Pearl Harbor or Hiroshima. The event directly led to a war against Afghanistan whose Taliban government had sheltered Al-Qaeda. Indirectly, it has led to a major shift in US security policy which is now premised on launching pre-emptive attacks on targets well before they reach the potential of becoming active threats. Washington has since deployed troops in many countries to carry out special operations against alleged terrorists. The United States, has deemed that all its potential enemies are part of an 'Axis of Evil', and in 2003 it launched a war on what it said was the most dangerous among them – Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. The US action had no sanction in international law; it rested primarily on a new doctrine of pre-emption formulated by elements of the Bush Administration in the wake of the WTC event.

Domestically, the Bush Administration put in place draconian domestic laws allowing the government to arrest those it deemed to be 'terrorists', hold them indefinitely without charge, and try them in secret military courts with no appeal. People of Middle Eastern or South Asian origin, even US citizens and legal residents, faced unprecedented attacks on their personal freedoms.

The WTC attack and the American response has had a significant effect on the Indian subcontinent where India has been battling terrorism unleashed by separatist movements aided and abetted by its neighbor Pakistan. The WTC event and its handling had inevitable echoes in India where public opinion demanded tougher government responses against terrorists and their foreign sponsors.

9/11

The graphic 'real-time' image of the WTC attack made it difficult to escape from the sheer horror of the event. For most Indians the connection came through witnessing the event on TV, as well as coverage that focused on the fact that hundreds of the victims may have been Indian citizens or persons of Indian origin.

Yet, there was one major difference: India has been used to terrorist violence for over two decades, having lost thousands of people by the early 1990s. On

March 12, 1993, fifteen explosions in a period of two hours hit various targets in India's premier commercial center – Bombay, or as it is now renamed, Mumbai; 250 were killed and over 700 injured. The terrorists were Muslims apparently avenging the horrific riots that had shaken the city and the country months earlier after the destruction of the Babri Masjid (mosque) by a mob of Hindu fundamentalists.

Given the scale and nature of the event, the Bombay blasts were, arguably, the worst act of urban terrorism before 9/11. Just as the WTC may have been chosen because it symbolized US commercial power, the Bombay bombers chose targets with similar care. One of the worst blasts took place in the basement parking lot of the Bombay Stock Exchange. The blast that shook the Air India headquarters would have been catastrophic, but for a vigilant security guard who prevented a terrorist driving a car packed with explosives from parking in the passageway under the building.[1]

Through the 1980s and 1990s, India had witnessed hundreds of terrorist incidents taking the lives of thousands. The method of terrorist violence has varied, from the use of car bombs and explosive devices to individual killings. In 1984, an Air India Boeing 747 was blown up over the Atlantic on a flight from Toronto to Bombay killing 329 persons. Two persons are now being tried for the crime in Canada. Terrorist violence has not spared anyone and its victims included women and children, police and army personnel, officials, ministers, and even prime ministers and other public persons.

The Indian discourse was thus conditioned by a painful awareness of what terrorism meant first-hand. However, Indian commentators pointed out some important differences. For instance, 9/11 led to unprecedented unity of purpose with the administration and opposition dealing with it in a bipartisan fashion. The Indian experience of various terrorist 'events', on the other hand, has been one of immediate recriminations and charges of 'intelligence' or 'security' failures. In terms of the coverage of the events, too, as a commentator noted, the American media were different. They hesitated to display the remains of the dead and were sensitive in handling the grief of their loved ones.[2] Their Indian counterparts, on the other hand, have displayed terrorist violence with all its accompanying blood and gore.

The Indian discourse has also been shaped by the very recent growth of private TV channels and cable TV. Cable TV came to India in the wake of the Gulf War of 1991. Currently there are an estimated 30 million cable subscribers in India, many of them belonging to the urban middle classes. Terrestrial TV is still controlled by the government, though the entity responsible for it has become an autonomous corporation known as the Prasar Bharati. In this same period, print media, too, have grown. One study has put the growth rate at about 5.6 percent per annum.

Traditionally Indian print media have been among the freest in the world. This is as much a product of Indian democracy as through poorly developed libel laws. There is no right to information either, but the government is armed with the Official Secrets Act, a 1924 statute that is draconian in its scope, though

lenient in terms of punishment. However, mainstream journalists have not been challenged by the statute. The only time the press faced a sustained attack was during the national emergency of 1975–1977, when the press was censored. Several statutes underwriting the freedom of the press were repealed and draconian laws to muzzle the press enacted. Hundreds of journalists were detained under preventive detention orders. There have been other shorter-lived efforts to muzzle the press. Stung by reporting on the Bofors issue, the Congress Party government of Rajiv Gandhi attempted to enact a defamation bill in July 1988. But a massive protest by the media compelled the already weakened government to withdraw the bill.

Until recently, all electronic media were government controlled and hence regulated. With the growth of cable TV and private radio channels, the tradition of freedom has been expanded to cover their activities as well. For some time, the government kept control of visual media by restricting rights of uplinking, but in the past two years they have been freed as well. The government still retains the right to censor all cinema made in India, but so far it has not attempted to expand these powers to the small-screen serials.

The September 11 event, along with the December 13, 2001, attack on India's Parliament House, have sharply heightened the international community's sensitivities toward terrorist activity. This has led to sharper scrutiny and often sharp criticism of the international and national media for not doing enough to fight terrorism. From the time Margaret Thatcher criticized the British media for providing the 'oxygen of publicity' to terrorists, there have been debates over the role of the media in covering terrorist incidents and events. Typically governments have wanted the media to highlight the misdeeds of the terrorists and ignore the sometimes extra-legal methods used by the authorities to combat them, or to focus on issues that give birth to terrorism. The media, on the other hand, would like to tell the whole story without necessarily glorifying terrorists or terrorism.

Government and regulation in India

There are no specific guarantees for the freedom of the press in the Indian Constitution. The freedoms flow from the court's interpretations of the basic freedom of speech for all citizens enshrined in Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. Courts have backed generous freedoms for the print media, even while supporting the government on 'reasonable restrictions' sought to be imposed for specific purposes. As one analysis notes, 'Imposition of pre-censorship in a newspaper or prohibiting it from publishing its own views, or those of its correspondents on a burning contemporary topic, have been held to constitute an encroachment on the freedom of the press.'[3]

The broadcast media and Internet, however, are treated a little differently. One reason for this is that since independence the print media have been overwhelmingly privately owned, while the broadcast media – radio and TV – have been owned by the government. The perspective of the courts on the broadcast

media is: while the right to broadcast is part of the freedoms under Article 19(1)(a), the airwaves and frequencies are public property, and because they are limited they are needed to be used in the best interests of society and, therefore, require some sort of regulation. The courts have, however, largely upheld the belief that the regulatory framework must be non-bureaucratic and autonomous.

Until 2000, TV companies could not directly uplink to satellites. Since then a new procedure has been put in place that allows uplinking for companies registered in India under the Indian Companies Act, 1956. Not more than 49 per cent of the equity shares in the company shall be held by foreign entities, including non-resident Indians.

The licenses are provided with a number of restrictions, including a commitment by the licensees to observe the Broadcasting (Programme & Advertising) Codes laid down by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting. Further, they are required to keep records of materials uplinked for a period of ninety days. They are also required to provide the necessary monitoring facility at their own cost for monitoring programs or content by the representative of the Ministry of I&B or any other government agency as and when required.[4]

Restrictions on the flow of information through the Internet are more nebulous. However, the recently privatized company Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd has the sole right to maintain international gateways and all Internet providers are obliged to use these gateways. By and large traffic along these gateways has been free. But during the Kargil conflict of 1999, VSNL blocked access to the site of *Dawn*, the moderate Pakistani daily. There was no acknowledgement of this fact, and it remains a mystery as to why the decision was taken to block a moderate newspaper.[5]

The freedom of speech provided by Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution is the basis for the freedom of the media in India. But the second clause, Article 19(2)(a)(1) has qualified this and has permitted the state to pass laws relating to libel, slander, contempt of court, or matters that affect 'public morality, or undermines the security of, or tends to overthrow, the State'. There are scores of laws that have a bearing on the issue and can therefore be used to check press freedoms. These range from colonial era acts like the Indian Telegraph Act of 1898, The Police (Incitement of Disaffection) Act, 1922, the Official Secrets Act, 1923, to the post-Independence Atomic Energy Act of 1962, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, and the Prevention of Terrorism Act of 2002. The 1860 Indian Penal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code, too, have various sections that can be used punitively against the press.

The most dramatic use of government power to control the press came during 1975, following the imposition of a national emergency by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The entire Indian media were placed under censorship. After initial protests, most newspapers went along with the restrictions. In 1977 the emergency was lifted following Mrs. Indira Gandhi's defeat in the general election and the press restrictions, too, were removed. There was such a severe reaction to censorship that no government since has felt comfortable with ad vocating the idea, even in the most trying of times, though for a brief period in the mid-1980s states like Punjab enforced censorship.

In 1988, however, there was an attempt to muzzle the press by enacting a defamation bill that sought to punish by two to five years' imprisonment those publishing 'grossly indecent or scurrilous' matter. Critics charged that these two terms were not defined, and that while these could be done for public good, it was left for the accused to prove what public good was involved. So draconian were the provisions of the bill that the entire media – journalists, owners, and proprietors – protested against its provisions and forced the government to back off even though the bill had been adopted by the Lok Sabha.[6]

Press Council of India and regulation

There is a kind of loose regulation of the press in India which is undertaken by the Press Council of India, set up through the Press Council Act of 1978. The body is somewhat similar to the Press Complaints Commission in the United Kingdom. However, unlike the PCC, the PCI does not have industry support, though it is usually headed by a senior, retired judge. It sees its dual responsibility as requiring it 'to preserve the freedom of the press and to maintain and improve standards of newspapers and news agencies'. But its perspective was best stated by a former chairman who was also a respected retired Supreme Court judge in a collection containing two of its reports:

> A free press is an indispensable prerequisite of democracy. Whereas the press has a right to publish and circulate in a sober, objective, truthful and comprehensive manner, news, views, ideas and comments based on information from diverse, antagonistic sources, without prior restraint, coercive or distorting pressures from the government, political parties, militant groups, advertisers, press barons or any other conceivable agency, it has also a correlated duty to so exercise this right that it does not impinge upon the rights of others, or impair the paramount interests of the State, or the welfare peace and order of the society.[7]

As is evident from this, the PCI's definition of press freedom is very wide since it seeks to make 'the press' autonomous of even its ownership. Also it ignores the transnational reach of the media, a factor that cannot be ignored since the arrival of satellite broadcasting and the Internet.

Since the early 1990s, there has been considerable thought given to the role of the media in reporting on national security. In the 1960s and 1970s, the emphasis was more on organizing the media to cover external war situations. Thus the government's Press Information Bureau would routinely organize a 'war correspondent's course' that involved correspondents being familiarized with the jargon of the armed forces and learning about the way they functioned. External war did not impose any professional dilemma on the press whose tendency in this period was to mirror its readership and adopt a 'patriotic' tone in its reportage.

But in the 1980s, the locale of the conflict often became internal – in Punjab,

then Kashmir, alongside the long-running insurgency in the northeast. So the situation became more complex for the press. Local staffers and stringers are prone to pressure from militants and terrorists; in some cases they may have sympathy for the cause. Further, the reportage is not on some external 'enemy' but on people who are citizens of the country, albeit estranged or wanting to secede.

Nevertheless, the press, backed by the Press Council of India, opposed any pre-censorship or, for that matter, censorship. In a ruling on the invocation of the Jammu and Kashmir Special Powers (Press) Bill of 1989, the PCI held that 'pre-censorship is inherently inimical to the freedom of the press'.

Both the reports referred to above were penned by a subcommittee of the PCI comprising B. G.. Verghese, K. Vikram Rao, and Jamna Das Akhtar. There had been a spate of restrictions on the press in Punjab since Operation Bluestar in which the army stormed the Golden Temple in Amritsar in 1984. According to independent observers, the regional media had played a significant role in vitiating the atmosphere. So on one hand, the government sought to place restrictions on the newspapers that were sympathetic to the secessionists, the Sikh extremists fighting for an independent homeland, and issued its own code of conduct demanding that the media not use loaded words such as 'terrorists' or 'so-called' or 'self-styled' when referring to the military ranks assumed by the terrorists.

The PCI was sympathetic to the journalists' plight and recommended a number of measures including enhanced insurance and 'reasonable security' to media personnel. It was clear, however, that 'there should be no resort to censorship, however limited, or suspension of publication of newspapers as sometimes suggested'. The PCI opposed any special media legislation and said that if there were instances of seditious and subversive material being printed by some newspapers, the best option was to prosecute them by the laws of the land.[8] The subcommittee's blunt prescription was:

> The media will have less to fear if their coverage is balanced and honest. True professionalism is expected by all, even from one's opponents. There is no other code the committee would prescribe. Anything less would be incomplete, anything more unnecessary.[9]

In June 1993, the PCI issued a report on the coverage of defense issues. The report noted that there was 'no longer a willing acceptance of a catch-all regime of official secrecy and even the concept of what constitutes national security has come to be questioned'.

After assessing written and oral submissions, the PCI concluded that there was a need 'for greater transparency' in relation to defense matters. In its view, 'public support and national morale are …. powerful force multipliers'. The report recommended that the Official Secrets Act be amended and a privacy law enacted. It called for an overhaul of the public relations machinery in the Ministry of Defence so as to make available timely information to the media.[10]

At various points in time, the PCI had issued guidelines for press coverage, which came mainly in the wake of communal violence. The first came in 1969 and were fairly straightforward. The press was asked not to invent grievances, or exaggerate them, and to use temperate and restrained language. In 1991, the PCI called on state governments to watch the inflammatory writing, mainly of the vernacular press. It accepted the fact that these governments may have to act against 'erring papers or editor' but it called on them to do so within the bounds of the law. In turn, it appealed to the media to avoid 'provocative and sensational headlines' in the wake of communal rioting.

The pressures generated by the dilemmas posed on reporting on national security compelled the PCI to issue a set of 'norms of Journalistic Conduct' in 1996. The PCI's perspective was an evolution of Justice Sarkaria's concept of the press as being autonomous, even from its ownership. The main purpose of journalism, the 1996 norms stated, was 'to serve the people with news, views, comments and information on matters of public interest in a fair, accurate, unbiased, sober and decent manner'.

Thereafter the PCI set out to outline the kind of prescriptions that all significant publications have in place anyway: accuracy and fairness, pre-publication verification of facts, right of reply, and so on. In addition there was the usual cautioning against glorifying violence and not identifying the caste or religion

Significantly, the PCI said that 'as a matter of self-regulation' the media ought to exhibit 'restraint and caution' in presenting any news, comment, or information 'which is likely to jeopardize, endanger or harm the paramount interests of the State and society'. However, it did not specify just who was to determine these interests. Yet another norm insisted on by the PCI was to call on the press to note that publishing 'incorrect' maps of India was a serious offence since 'it adversely affects the territorial integrity of the country'. Somewhat egregiously, the media were also called upon 'to build bridges of cooperation, friendly relations and better understanding between India and foreign states'.[11]

Conflict and pressure to regulate

In recent times, the 1999 Kargil War has been a major watershed on attitudes relating to national security in the country. It was also a point of departure on issues pertaining to relations between the government and media as well, since the conflict has been termed the first TV war fought by the Indian armed forces. Initially, the authorities were keen to keep the media away. However, for a variety of reasons, including the location of the conflict, this proved difficult and the war received considerable media attention with scores of reporters filing daily reports through the TV and print media.

The National Highway 1A that travels from Jammu to Srinagar and thereafter to Leh via Kargil was the lateral axies of the military activity from the Indian side; it also provided the means through which the media accessed the conflict. This is because the road was virtually a front with artillery batteries and the main divisional and brigade headquarters were located along it. Initially the

army checkpoints in Sonamarg were used to delay civilian traffic and block media access. So journalists poured in via Leh.

TV cameras provided graphic images, from the guns firing toward the Pakistani-held heights to the funeral rites of the slain soldiers. By this time it became clear that the media's projection of the war had led to an unprecedented outpouring of support for the armed forces, and so the army changed its policy.

The Kargil Review Committee examined the government's handling of the media in some detail. In its view, provision of a 'truthful and speedy' account of events was 'essential for building national morale [and] winning popular support'. Using the words that have great contemporary currency in India's security establishment it declared: 'The media is or can be a great force multiplier.' It recommended, therefore, a number of measures ranging from specific ones relating to broadcast issues in local languages to the provision of timely and accurate information in insurgency-affected areas.[12]

The Kargil Review also touched off a larger reform in the defense and security establishment of the country. This was done through a blue-ribbon panel of top government ministers. Four task forces – on defense reform, border management, internal security, and intelligence – gave their recommendations to the panel which, in turn, harmonized them and the report was given to the prime minister. After approval by the Cabinet Committee on National Security, the report was adopted and published with security deletions.

The recommendations spoke of the need to strengthen the dissemination of media oriented toward 'national development goals, security concerns and national integration'. The government could chip in by enhancing the coverage of state-owned TV and radio in the border areas, but there was a need to 'bridge' the views of the government and the privately owned national electronic media. The thrust of the report was more toward exploiting the media toward the ends of policy rather than of regulation.[13]

September 11 and after

The dramatic terrorist strike of September 11, 2001, led to the reiteration of a new anti-terrorist doctrine by the United States. This new Bush doctrine declared that the US would 'make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them'.[14] This culminated in an attack on Taliban-ruled Afghanistan beginning October 7 with a view of eliminating Al-Qaeda. The campaign first involved air attacks and thereafter a selective commitment of special forces and other arms.

Despite the overwhelming difference in the military capabilities of the two opposing sides, the Taliban/Al-Qaeda proved themselves a match for the United States and its allies in psychological warfare and information management.

In 1991 Saddam Hussein attempted to pitch his propaganda to the Arabic and Islamic world by attacking Israel. But his occupation of Kuwait had alarmed the Gulf monarchies, who were more than happy to assist the allies in destroying Iraqi military power. Osama bin Laden, on the other hand, has had

considerable appeal in the Arabic and Islamic world. The Taliban for its part had deep roots in Pakistan, the country that had played a critical role in creating the organization and its eventual supremacy in Afghanistan. The support was not just a matter of geopolitics, but of deeply held religious beliefs among many Pakistani religious parties and leaders. So while Osama bin Laden used Al-Jazeera to broadcast his messages, the Taliban effectively used the Pakistani media to put across its point of view, and later cultivated Western networks to put across its view that the war was causing huge civilian casualties.

The result was governmental pressure on the Western media for censorship and self-regulation. On October 10, following a meeting between Condoleezza Rice, the National Security Advisor, and network executives, a joint agreement was arrived at to abridge any future of videotaped statements of Osama bin Laden and remove those that the government considered inflammatory. The five – ABC News, CBS News, NBC News, CNN, and Fox News Channel – had broadcast unedited a taped message of Osama bin Laden on October 7, the day the US campaign began. White House Spokesman Ari Fleischer claimed that the move was designed to prevent coded messages to other terrorists, but it was clear that this was not true and the main aim was to prevent bin Laden from using the vast resources of Western media channels to broadcast his message.[15]

The US print media, too, agreed to a form of self-censorship. Leonard Downie Jr., the Executive Editor of the *Washington Post*, admitted that in the month since September 11, the paper had been called by administration officials raising 'concerns that a specific story, or more often that certain facts in a certain story, would compromise national security'. Downie conceded that 'in some instances we have kept out of stories certain facts that we agreed could be detrimental to national security'.[16]

The pressures on the media became more intense, especially as conservative groups attacked media networks for their perceived biases. Every word uttered by TV anchors, every image shown, was scrutinized, measured, and analyzed. A study of three major networks for the period October 8–31, 2002 by a right-of-center Media Research Center purported to show that ABC World News Tonight was particularly soft on the Taliban and 'spent far more time than its competitors' in showing that US bombs were killing Afghan civilians. In contrast, the report declared, the CBS Evening News had 'spent twice as much air time' covering 'the American military's dedication to keeping such casualties at an absolute minimum'.[17]

Analyzing coverage of the second Gulf War, the same outfit gave Fox News its highest rating of 'B' for its coverage, while CNN rated 'C+' and ABC somewhat predictably got a 'D–' 'for knee-jerk negativism that played up Iraqi claims of civilian suffering, hyped American military difficulties and indulged anti-war protesters with free air time'.[18] Actually the Fox News grade suffered because of the Geraldo Rivera fiasco when the colorful reporter was asked to leave his embedded position for revealing the location of the 101st Airborne Division, allegedly on a map drawn in the sand.

The pressures resulting led CNN Chair Walter Isaacson to order his staff to

'balance images of civilian devastation in Afghan cities with reminders that the Taliban harbors murderous terrorists', saying 'it seems perverse to focus too much on the casualties or hardship in Afghanistan'. In a memo to CNN's international correspondents, Isaacson said that CNN correspondents had to 'redouble' their efforts to ensure that they did not report from the Taliban perspective: 'We must talk about how the Taliban are using civilian shields and how the Taliban have harbored the terrorists responsible for killing close to 5,000 innocent people.' The essence of the memo, as one analysis noted, is that the world's most powerful media organization 'has instructed its journalists not to report Afghan civilian casualties without attempting to justify those deaths'.[19]

Early in the campaign, it became apparent that the Taliban was effectively using its Islamabad Embassy to counter the US media offensive. At the insistence of US officials, the office was shut down. But a more serious attack on what was perceived to be pro-Taliban reporting occurred when the office of Al-Jazeera in Kabul was targeted by a US missile on November 12, shortly after the Northern Alliance forces entered the Afghan capital.

The Qatar-based Al-Jazeera, seen by some 35 million Arabs, was an early hit in the war because of its coverage of the death and destruction that were ignored by the US media. Their scoops in obtaining Osama bin Laden tapes made them a byword in media circles.[20] Secretary of State Colin Powell denounced Al-Jazeera for airing 'vitriolic, irresponsible kinds of statements' when it broadcast a videotaped statement by suspected terrorist Osama bin Laden praising the September 11 attacks on the United States. The CIA leaked its concern that bin Laden might be sending secret messages through these taped statements. Condoleezza Rice, the National Security Advisor, called and visited with top American network and newspaper representatives, urging them to consider the dangers of airing bin Laden's views.[21] The possibility that Al-Jazeera was attacked deliberately represented a disturbing new development.

During the NATO attacks on Serbia, the Radio-Television Serbia building was bombed intentionally on April 23, 1999, killing sixteen civilians. At the time, NATO contended that it was 'targeting communications and radio and TV nodes which are supporting the power structure and the propaganda machine of Mr. [then President Slobodan] Milosevic'.

Gulf War II

In some ways the war in Afghanistan was a forerunner for the larger war against Iraq. Gulf War II, which took place from March to April 2003, saw the US media adopting a compliant approach. The planning for the war also involved intricate planning for media management. Stung with criticism that there had been too many restrictions on the media in Gulf War I, the Pentagon came up with a new plan. This was the concept of embedding media persons within US military units. Most of the 500-odd 'embeds' belonged to US media organizations, but some from friendly European and Arab countries were also provided berths.

Each correspondent had to sign a ground rules agreement which was 'for the safety of the U.S. forces and media'. Violation of the rules could result in the termination of the embedding arrangement and removal of the correspondent from the area. The agreement noted that 'the ground rules recognize the right of the media to cover military operations and are in no way intended to prevent release of derogatory, embarrassing, negative or uncomplimentary information'. The fifty-point ground rules were divided roughly into one-third 'do's' and one-third 'don'ts' and the balance were administrative arrangements relating to embedding. According to Sydney H. Schanberg, the former *New York Times* correspondent who covered Vietnam and Cambodia, the rules were ambiguous and designed to ensure 'good P.R. for the military'.[22]

The result was that the war's coverage was sharply divided between the 'embeds', generally providing a positive picture of the war from the Anglo-American context, and the so-called unilaterals. Nevertheless, the very use of the embed system has meant, in the opinion of a British broadcaster, that 'war coverage will never be the same again'. He maintained that other methods had to be used to give a fuller picture.[23]

So extreme was the pressure for 'real-time' news that there were gross errors and inaccurate reporting. For example, early reports indicated that the Iraqi port of Umm Qasr and the southern port city of Basra had been captured, but later these reports had to be corrected and the former was only fully captured a week later; Basra took even longer.

There was also a spat about the display of American POWs on Arabic TV stations. The American stations ignored the footage, while the Bush Administration condemned it as a violation of the Geneva Convention. Yet, earlier the Western channels had displayed graphic pictures of captured Iraqi combatants.

But just how dangerous it was to be one became apparent early in the war when an ITN reporter, Terry Lloyd, was killed while operating unilaterally in southern Iraq. Later, when the American forces entered Baghdad, there were serious charges that US forces had attacked the Al-Jazeera compound as well as the Palestine Hotel where most of the international journalists were residing.

The Al-Jazeera attack was most intriguing. The channel's officials maintain that just as in the case of Afghanistan, US officials had been told about its office's precise coordinates. Yet, the facility was struck and a journalist, Tareq Ayoub, killed. The incident at the Palestine Hotel where a number of 'unilaterals' had resided throughout the war was equally disturbing. Believing that Iraqis were directing from its roof, a US tank fired at the hotel, killing a Spanish and a Ukranian cameraman. US officials later claimed that its forces 'do not target the media', but it is hardly likely that they would acknowledge that they did so.[24] The two Al-Jazeera attacks are simply too coincidental to indicate anything else other than, if need be, the United States would be willing to target what it perceived to be hostile media.

December 13, 2001 – attack on India's Parliament

For India, the September 11 event and its aftermath are inextricably bound to the December 13 attack on Parliament House. While for the United States, the former was the first major terrorist attack on its homeland, the attack in New Delhi was a culmination of sorts of terrorist violence that went back two decades. Fortunately the attackers were shot dead before they could enter the Parliament building. Had they managed to enter and hold or kill Parliamentarians, the situation would have been far more serious.

Many Indian commentators saw the attack on the United States as an extension of what India had been undergoing for more than the past decade. There was a hubristic edge in the reaction of many that the United States had been made to confront what India had endured for so long. Like September 11, the December 13 drama was played out in front of the TV cameras. This was by sheer luck. The site for the TV crews had been placed some 60 meters away from the scene of the action. Earlier it used to be at the very gate of the main entrance into Parliament House, where one of the terrorists was blown up. What the plan was we can only speculate, but it appears that it was to have a long-drawn-out and possibly bloody hostage drama.

TV played a major role in reporting both the September 11 and December 13 incidents. According to figures made available by Sanchyeeta Bhattacharya and Vivek Kumar, during the WTC attack, news channels in India cornered 20 percent of the channel share during prime time (7 p.m. to 11.59 p.m.) on the day of the incident. Because of the time, around 11.40 a.m., the December 13 incident's high viewing time was around noon that day and the channel share between noon and 1 p.m. was 23 percent. However, as prime time approached, the soaps were back and news channel share was down to around 11 percent, though higher than the average of around 2–3 percent.[25]

The study notes that the December 13 events led 'to an all-time high in news channel viewership', and that the number of 'serious viewers of this genre had almost trebled after the WTC attack'. It also shows that total viewership of the news channels had increased during the September 11, Afghan bombing, and December 13 weeks, and that this increase is not necessarily at the expense of other channels but that total viewership itself increased.[26]

Though there was a huge disparity in the casualties, the attack on the Parliament, the primary symbol of the Indian state, was seen by Indians as a grave provocation. In the Indian mind, there is a continuum of sorts in the two events, especially since they were separated by just three months or so. Inevitably the Indian discourse was shaped by the American response. India's reaction to the Bombay blasts of 1993, a roughly comparable act of terrorism, was mild. Despite clinching evidence of Pakistani complicity, it did not do anything beyond verbal criticism of the Pakistani action.

But in the aftermath of December 13, there was palpable pressure on the government to emulate the Bush Administration's tough reaction to the WTC attack. While the Parliament attack had not resulted in as grievous a loss of life

as 9/11, it rated high on the symbolic scale since the target was the Indian Parliament.

The government of India ordered a general mobilization of the Indian Army, the most extensive since India and Pakistan had gone to war in 1971. Roughly half-a-million additional forces were rushed to the border, including three strike corps, and mines were laid extensively along the approaches from Pakistan. These were in addition to other steps such as the withdrawal of the Indian High Commissioner from Pakistan and the termination of Pakistani civil airline flights over India. But at the end of the day there was no war and, despite more heinous terrorist incidents such as the massacre of the families of army personnel in Kaluchak, in Jammu, and in Kashmir in May 2002, the government called off the mobilization in October 2002.

Prevention of terrorism laws and media regulation

But the changed circumstances following 9/11 were manifested in another way in the Indian discourse, as indeed it was in the West. Amongst the more significant responses to the terrorist acts were the passage of anti-terrorism laws. The US Patriot Act of 2001 enacted in the aftermath of the 11 September attack provided additional powers to the federal government and the attorney-general and established a new criminal prohibition against harboring terrorists. The detention of an individual can be extended for up to five days under the UK's Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provision) Act 1989. But this can be done only with the permission of the Home Office. In any case, the United States arrogated the right to hold in detention indefinitely any non-American suspects it could lay its hands on.

In India, the government took the opportunity to come up with a more draconian Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO). Its predecessor, the Terrorism and Disruptive Activities Act, had lapsed six years earlier. So marked had been its misuse that in the intervening period no government was able to pass a successor act. The events of 9/11 changed that. Sections 3(8) and 14 would punish anyone who possesses information relevant to the possible commission of terrorist acts, but 'fails' to disclose it.. The language 'If an investigating officer has reason to believe that such information will be useful for, or relevant to, the purposes of this ordinance' means that the officer can demand anything from anybody.

Early in the debate, fears were expressed that this provision could also be used against journalists who in their line of duty may interview a 'terrorist' or terrorist 'sympathizer' without necessarily knowing his or her criminal plans. This demand that journalists part with their information was seen as an unreasonable restriction on the public right to information. That the journalist should part with information imposed an obligation that could have amounted to unreasonable restrictions upon the freedom of expression. It is in the rarest of cases that journalists are privy to terrorists' plans. In any case, the obligation to inform the authorities about such plans should the journalist be aware of them is obvious and is taken care of by other laws on the statute book.

POTO was approved by the Lok Sabha or Lower House of Parliament, but failed to pass in the Rajya Sabha, or Upper House. On March 26, 2002, a rare joint session of Parliament voted in favor of the controversial legislation which was then adopted as the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA). The new law modified the earlier ordinance by dropping the provisions that were criticized because they could affect the freedom of the press.

The issue of special exemption for journalists reporting on terrorism and terrorists is fraught will all manner of consequences. The first problem is in defining just who is a journalist. Terrorist networks across the world have front organizations and even newspapers, and presumably among their sympathizers number journalists. At which point does the sympathizer become an accomplice? The two men who killed Ahmad Shah Masood were journalists or posing as newsmen. Rajiv Gandhi's assassination squad, too, appeared to have been posing as journalists. There are, of course, journals which could be classed as publications of terrorist organizations.

In UK, the Prevention of Terrorism Act makes it an offense for a person who 'believes or suspects that another person has committed an offence' not to disclose this information to a constable. The British law excludes information an individual obtains in a personal capacity by specifying the provision applies to those who come across such information 'in the course of a trade, profession, business or employment'. This would prevent, for example, a mother being forced to give information on her son's friends. But it does bring journalists into its net.

In the wake of the February 28, 2002, Godhra massacre in Gujarat and its terrible aftermath of the revenge killing of Muslims, the role of the media, especially that of the English language mainstream print media, has come into focus. The media have been attacked for their alleged anti-Hindu bias and a continuous barrage of criticism has been unleashed from quarters that are not entirely disinterested. Responding to the debate in the Lok Sabha, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee criticized the media for whipping up emotions. On the other hand, many media commentators believe that the publicity given to events in Gujarat helped check the situation.[27]

The case of Iftikhar Gilani

Within three months of POTA's coming into force, fears of its misuse became apparent. On June 9, 2002, the Delhi police arrested Iftikhar Gilani, a journalist working for the Jammu-based *Kashmir Times* and several Pakistani newspapers. The arrest was in reality aimed at harassing the family of Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Iftikhar's father-in-law, who happens to be a Jamaat-e-Islami Kashmir leader, a vociferous advocate of the merger of Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan and a founding member of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, a conglomeration of Kashmiri separatist organizations.

Despite a search of his residence the police could not come up with anything to justify the arrest of Ifthikar. However, the police later claimed they had found

a document on his computer containing the deployment of the Indian Army in the Jammu and Kashmir areas.

Two days later his wife submitted the original document showing that there was nothing secret about the document that had been found. It had been extracted from a publication entitled *A Review of Indian Repression in Kashmir* published by an Islamabad (Pakistan) based research organization called The Institute of Strategic Studies.

What should have led to the release of Iftikhar now became a murky event in which the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Delhi police conspired to ensure that he was not granted bail or released. Documents presented before the court indicated the extent to which the authorities were willing to go in this endeavor. On December 12, 2002, B. R. Dhiman, writing on behalf of the Ministry of Home Affairs, declared that Military Intelligence had declared that 'the document is prejudicial to the security of the country and has serious ramifications on our operational plans in J&K'. He was merely reproducing the earlier letter, even while the Ministry of Home Affairs had in its possession a new assessment by the Director-General of Military Intelligence that 'on further examination, it is found that the information contained in the documents is easily available like in a published booklet entitled "A Review of Indian Repression in Kashmir", brought out as Islamabad Papers by Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad'.

The court then summoned the Director-General of Military Intelligence, who confirmed on December 23 that a second opinion had been sent. The Joint Police Commissioner and Ministry of Home Affairs officials denied all knowledge of it. But the Ministry of Home Affairs did not give up. A meeting was convened by Special Secretary A. K. Bhandari where representatives of various security organizations, including the Director-General of Military Intelligence were present. The Ministry of Home Affairs took the view that the latter was not asked to comment on the source of the document, but merely as to whether the information contained in it was harmful to the country.

In other words, the government view that the fact that a piece of information was obtained from the public domain was irrelevant, all that mattered was whether or not the government considered the information prejudicial to the security of the country. This extraordinary decision of the meeting was conveyed to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate on January 7, by Under Secretary Dhiman. But three days later, the government dropped its case and Gilani was released.[28]

Self-regulation

If regulation by state is not acceptable then what about self-regulation? Since liberal democratic tradition militates against regulation, the idea of self-regulation has often been mooted. This issue can be looked at in three distinct ways. The first is a purely technical one that seeks to regulate journalistic practice and ethics. The British Press Complaints Commission's Code of Practice offers a model of sorts that can be examined. Unlike the Press Council of India's statist

orientation, the PCC's code confines itself to professional issues and is ideology-free. It relates to accuracy, right to reply, privacy, harassment, treatment of stories relating to children or sexual assault. The code allows exemption on grounds of 'public interest', but its concept of 'public interest' relates to prevention of serious crime, protecting public health and safety, and not the well-being of the state. In its view, 'there is a public interest in freedom of expression itself'.[29]

Another kind of self-regulation is often mooted in terms of protecting the sensibilities of readers and viewers. This is the kind of voluntary code that US movie producers accept when they rate their films. This is a particularly sensitive subject in cases of communal tension in India. Many people believe that the display of charred bodies from the February 28, 2002, Godhra massacre in Gujarat not only was in poor taste, but also tended to inflame passions. Note: no mangled remains were showed by US networks in the wake of the WTC attack.

But there is a third kind of self-regulation that seeks to hide unpleasant facts on grounds of security or patriotism. This is probably better described as 'self-censorship'. For example, a large section of Western media ignored pictures of the carnage resulting from the infamous turkey shoot when US aircraft strafed already defeated columns of retreating Iraqi soldiers in 1991.

In Afghanistan and Gulf War II, American journalists did a great deal of self-regulation in playing down the death of civilians and destruction of their property. But this did not prevent such reportage from being aired courtesy of the Arab language channels and other media.

We are not going into the more treacherous area of psychological operations or psyops, where the media are used by government organizations to mislead the adversary. To what extent this was done in Gulf War II is uncertain, but the many stories that were put out, such as the capture of Umm Qasr and Basra and An Nasiriyah, or the stores of chemical and biological weapons, had a touch of psyops. Indeed, it has transpired that the so-called rescue of Private Jessica Lynch was a stage-managed affair. A BBC investigation revealed that there was no opposition to the special forces rescue squad that arrived at night accompanied by a camera team. The shots fired were blanks to simulate an attack and Private Lynch never had any stab or bullet wounds, attributed earlier by the US officials to bad treatment by the Iraqis. In fact she received the best treatment available and was provided the only specialist bed in the hospital and one of the two nurses on the floor.[30]

Conclusion

The Indian discourse on the events of September 11 and after has been shaped by a long and painful experience with terrorism. September 11 became a kind of a bridge by which the average Indian linked concerns with people around the world, especially in the United States. There are some important differences in which this discourse was played out. In India, despite a wave of anger following the December 13 attack on Parliament, the government reaction was carefully

calibrated and cautious. The government of India did talk and act tough – it withdrew its High Commissioner from Islamabad, reduced diplomatic staff there, cut rail and air links with Pakistan, and asked for the extradition of twenty 'most wanted' terrorists who it said were residing in Pakistan. The country's armed forces were mobilized and massed near the border, but withdrawn nine months later, despite another horrific terrorist incident at Kaluchak.

The Indian government has moved to bring in tough legislation such as POTA to curb terrorist activity. But the use of the statute to settle political scores, as in the case of Jayalalithaa's arrest of Vaiko for his alleged Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam links in Tamil Nadu, or Mayawati's detention of Raghuraj Pratap Singh, a thakur (leader) with a criminal background in Uttar Pradesh for trying to undermine her government, has undermined the efficacy of the legislation.

The Indian government and elites sought to turn the 9/11 discourse to their advantage by arguing that they were in the forefront of the war against terror, which in this case was the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan that had sheltered Al-Qaeda. The Indian interest was transparently obvious – the Pakistan Army's Inter-Services Intelligence which ran the Kashmir operation against India was also the Taliban's mentor. The Indian effort failed since realpolitik required Pakistan be a key member of the American anti-terror coalition. President Musharraf self-consciously turned Pakistan's back on the Taliban to ensure that he did not have to give in to India.

There was a commonality of sorts in the manner in which the media, especially the electronic media, shaped the discourse. This was best illustrated by the case of the Bombay blasts of 1993 that took place before the era of twenty-four-hour private news channels and the December 2001 attack on Parliament. In the former case, most people got the import of the news over a twelve-hour period through their morning dailies, while in the latter case, the event was actually carried live because it happened in front of the TV position in Parliament House.

The playing out of the American retribution on the Taliban on CNN and other channels has had a considerable influence on Indian public opinion. It has encouraged the demand for more aggressive action against Pakistan. The reasoning is that if the United States could come half-way around the world to avenge a terrorist incident, why couldn't India react the same way against its tormentors across the border in Pakistan?

The effort by both governments to shape legislation to tackle the threats showed the ways in which the commonality of the discourse provided a common response. But both the US Patriot Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act have been criticized domestically for their loopholes and flaws.

The US-led attack on Iraq has shown the extent to which the discourse was changed by 9/11. The world may have disagreed, but the US public supported the attack on Iraq on the specious grounds that Iraq was some kind of a threat to the United States. It remains to be seen whether this is an aberration or a fundamental shift in the manner with which the United States will deal with the world.

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8 The Jewish Hand

The response of the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind

Irfan Ahmad

I

> With such an organized secrecy and so much of resources who can engineer this destruction (September 11)? … Some 75 years ago, Iqbal had underlined the greatest weakness of the West: The jugular vein of the West lies in the clutches of the Jews. The history of the world is witness to the fact that Jews have been the axis of every great mischief and conspiracy. … But they are matchless in the art of blaming others.
>
> (Maulana Mohammad Sirajul Hasan (2002: 6), President, Jamaat-e-Islam Hind)

January 13, 2001. On an extremely cold morning in Aligarh, a town some 131 kilometers east of Delhi, the Civil Line unit of the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) organizes a heated symposium on 'The Issue of Terrorism: With Reference to the Country's Contemporary Situation'. The audience is unusually large – almost five times greater than the usual strength of its weekly meeting. There seem to be two reasons for this. First, it is obviously a hot topic after September 11. Second, the symposium is to be addressed, as stated in the invitation letter, by 'famous ideologues of the Islamic movement'. Maulana Yusuf Islahi, a national leader of the JIH, is the key guest speaker.

Maulana Islahi has the following position: the September 11 event is a well-planned conspiracy to defame Islam. Muslims are being blamed for it without any evidence. Everyone knows who is the real culprit, Jews. Yet, the United States, the so-called champion of human rights and democracy, is targeting Muslims in Afghanistan and elsewhere. If the United States really believes in democracy, why is it supporting monarchy in Saudi Arabia? Hundreds of Islamic activists have been recently imprisoned there. The condition in Saudi Arabia is thus worse than in India. The United States has unjustly and arrogantly ruled the world for too long. Allah has destroyed that arrogance on September 11. God willing, this will also inaugurate the age of Islam the world over.

Before Islahi, Saud Alam Qasmi had made a passionate speech arguing that Jews, not Muslims, are terrorists. Jewish history is the history of terrorism. 'Jesus did not disappear, Jews killed him.' As for Islam, it is being forcibly linked with terrorism. It is indeed the religion of peace and divine truth. After September

11, the Italian prime minister said that Christianity would conquer Islam. But barely two weeks after his statement, the Italian Ambassador in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, embraced Islam. In India also, says Qasmi, thousands of people annually convert to Islam even amidst bloody communal riots. Therein lies Islam's power and hope for a bright future.

A fortnight earlier, Syed S. Husaini, the national President of the Student Islamic Organization (SIO), the student wing of JIH, had expressed similar views in a lecture, held every Saturday in its Delhi-based headquarters situated on the bank of the Jamuna River. Speaking on *The Course of Action for Muslim Ummah in the Global Context*, he said that the West was really afraid of Islam's expansion. Hence its desperation to link it with terrorism. True, the United States is the military superpower and Japan the technological superpower. But let us not forget that Islam today is the ideological superpower. It is rapidly growing worldwide. Thousands have embraced Islam in the United States even after September 11. Islam indeed is the future and the future is Islamic. Given this, Muslims should ceaselessly do *Dawah* in India. 'Insha Allah,' he said, 'we will establish Islam's hegemony'.[1]

II

What Husaini and the participants of the symposium said about September 11 is also broadly reflected in JIH's Urdu and English organs – *Sehroza Dawat* and *Radiance*. But before we content analyze them, it would be worthwhile to know, albeit briefly, the context of JIH's formation and its current position in India. As is well known, Jamaat-e-Islami was formed in undivided India in 1941 by Syed Abul Ala Maududi (1903–1979) to establish *Hukumat-e-Ilahiya*, God's governance. Maududi presented it as an alternative to both the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, the two main parties dominating the political scene in the late 1930s. He rejected the Congress because under Congress-ruled India, he feared Hindus would absorb Muslims. He dismissed the League for its nationalism as a pale replica of the West. The League leadership, he felt, was not in the hands of righteous *Ulema* but the Western-educated individuals in whose scheme Islam as an all-inclusive ideology never figured. To be precise, the would-be Pakistan shall not be an Islamic state based on the *Sharia* but a mirror image of Godless, Western, secular democracy.[2]

Barely six years after the formation of the Jamaat-e-Islami, India was partitioned. And in a volte-face of the first order, Maududi chose to be a citizen of the same Pakistan, which he had been ruthlessly condemning.[3] After partition of the subcontinent into Pakistan and India, it was divided into two separate political organizations: Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan and Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) respectively. The organizational division, however, did not lead to any substantive ideological shift. In India JIH described its goal as realizing *Iqamate-e-Deen*, the establishment of religion.[4] Until 1952 JIH had a unit in Jammu and Kashmir, the only Muslim-majority state in India, that was constitutionally part of the former. Given the disputed nature of Jammu and Kashmir, however, in

1952 it decided to separate itself from its unit in Jammu and Kashmir. Since then Jamaat-e-Islami Jammu and Kashmir (JIJK) is separate from and independent of JIH. JIJK, unlike JIH, has participated in state elections. Right from the beginning it has questioned India's claim over Jammu and Kashmir and since 1989, when militancy began there, has been actively involved, directly or indirectly, in the armed struggle against Indian forces. In 1990, the Indian government banned JIJK for encouraging 'unlawful activities' (Sikand 2002: 723ff.).

The radically changed circumstances following partition in India excluding Jammu and Kashmir, nonetheless, required a different course for the JIH in India. Maududi left a blueprint, markedly different from that of its counterpart in Pakistan, for the JIH to follow. Given the numerical size of Muslims in post-1947 India, he recommended a four-fold action plan for the success of what he called the 'Islamic movement'. First, elimination of communal conflict that had gripped both Hindus and Muslims. Indian Muslims must not, as did the Muslim League before, raise any demand for representation in assemblies or government services. 'They should rather develop,' advised Maududi, 'indifference towards the new government and political system' (Maududi 1996: 32). Second, Muslims should radically transform themselves in a manner such that non-Muslims begin to consider their religion and culture inferior to that of Islam. Third, all of their intellectual resources should be harnessed in the ceaseless propagation of Islam. Fourth, and following from the above, Muslims should readily learn the Indian languages to spread Islam far and wide. Their obsession with Urdu, he feared, would hinder the process of interaction with non-Muslims, the main target of JIH's mission. If the above steps were followed with zeal and conviction, predicted Maududi, in the future (he did not specify the time frame) the JIH will succeed in establishing an Islamic nation-state in India. The policies of the JIH since 1947 have been broadly in line with the original blueprint drawn up by its founder with one crucial and notoriously controversial exception.

Of Maududi's four points, the first one was not implemented quite fully. From the mid-1960s the JIH began to take an active interest in Indian politics. In line with Maududi's action plan, it had earlier asked its members not to vote in elections during the 1950s. Voting was considered *Haram* since the JIH regarded the Indian political system as ungodly and un-Islamic. However, after the emergency was imposed in June 1975 it lifted the restriction on its members temporarily and also campaigned for the victory of opposition parties (Ahmad 1998: 78–80). In 2002 state elections in the Uttar Pradesh state I witnessed it actively campaign against the communal, fascist candidates to ensure the victory of secularism and democracy. It has still not decided to field its own candidates either for the Assembly or for the Parliament, however. Obviously, this change was triggered by the growing militancy and anti-minorities policies of the currently ruling religious party, the Bhartiya Janata Party, at the center. This official move was contested by a significant number of its members, though. For them it was a stark deviation from the original line adopted soon after India's independence by JIH. (Non-)participation in voting is thus a major point of controversy within JIH (for details see Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (undated)).

Numerically speaking, the influence of JIH on Indian Muslims is not very significant. In 2000 it had no more than 5000 members, *Arkaan*, 25,411 workers and 270,146 sympathizers. It has contacts with 2769 non-Muslims. However, its influence is extremely strong among educated middle-class Muslims and its numerical size is not indeed the right barometer of its actual impact on Muslim society. Its chain of educational networks comprising nursery schools (67), primary schools (277), colleges (32), technical schools (6), adult education centers (288), religious seminaries of various standards (234), libraries (1728), study circles (850), audio libraries (76), postal libraries (20), and social services such as hospitals (15), clinics (74), interest-free banks (378), *Zakat* centers (713), and *Shariat Panchayats*, Islamic legal courts, (72), is a very powerful and cohesive instrument through which it commands influence.[5] It also publishes books, pamphlets, and newspapers, e.g., *Radiance* in Englishand *Sehroza Dawat* in Urdu, in almost all the important Indian languages. Its student wing, SIO, has grown quite strong in the last ten years. As of 2001 it had 3409 members and 40,546 associates[6]. In north India, Aligarh Muslim University has the largest unit of SIO.

Now let us proceed to discuss how *Sehroza Dawat* and *Radiance* have read this monumental episode of the new millennium – September 11. Based on their analyses, the final section of the paper will attempt to raise certain theoretical issues emerging therefrom and the relation between the media and the public sphere. The analysis of *Sehroza Dawat* is drawn from issues published between September 16, 2001 and February 4, 2002, and of *Radiance* between September 16 and December 29, 2001.

III

Dawat in Urdu means what *Dawah* does in Arabic. It literally means 'invitation to faith'. In Urdu an invitation to dinner is also called *Dawat*. In the Indian context *Dawat* synoptically explains the method through which JIH seeks to achieve its goal of *Iqamat-e-Deen*, Islamic state. Its founder, Maududi, had predicted that an Islamic state in India could become a reality only through *Dawat*, first among Muslims and eventually among non-Muslims.[7] The full name of the paper is *Sehroza Dawat*, three-day *Dawat*. Consisting of six pages, it is published twice a week and has a circulation of about 10,000–15,000. Originally it was launched as a weekly on September 13 in 1953 (Yusuf: 1989). Around 1957 it was changed into a biweekly and remains so even today. Presently it is published from New Delhi. It has been regularly published since 1953 to date except during the emergency (1975–1977) when it was closed for two months.[8]

An important point to keep in mind while dealing with the Urdu press is its historical specificity. There is a substantive difference between the content, readership composition, and editorial policy of Urdu and English newspapers or weeklies. Unlike the English press that reportedly addresses itself mainly to the English-educated 'secular' elites and upper middle class of varied faiths, the Urdu press in post-1947 India has come to be identified, ironically, with

Muslims. It broadly caters to the lower classes of the Muslim majority, many of whom were educated in the traditional Urdu medium *Madarsas* or *Maktabs*. The news covered and issues raised in the Urdu press are thus predominantly related to Muslims. Exceptions to this general trend are, among others, two newspapers: *Hind Samachar* and *Milap*. The former is one of the largest selling newspapers in the Punjab. The latter is published from Delhi and Jalandhar. Very few Muslims read *Hind Samachar*and *Milap*, however.

Though the history of Urdu journalism is 182 years old – the first Urdu newspaper, *Jaam-e-Jahan Numa*,was launched under Munshi Sada Sukh's editorship in 1822 from Calcutta (Khurshid 1963: 35) – and it has a checkered history,[9] some scholars believe that it has maintained continuity in terms of its basic feature. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, a dissident of JIH and a noted Islamic scholar, argues that Urdu journalism indeed evolved as the journalism of protest and reaction. Its protest was directed chiefly at four enemies: the British government, Ahmadiyas–Arya Samaj–Christian Missionaries, Western culture, and Hindu communalism. Highly critical of this trend, Khan says:

> The fundamental demerit of Urdu journalism is that it was born out of reaction against the tyranny of the enemies. The entire Urdu press, therefore, perennially suffers from a persecution complex. … A person with persecution complex can never examine events objectively. He sees events not as a judge but as a partisan. … This is the reason why reports in Urdu press are made either with one-sided orientation to Muslim emotions or generalizations are drawn from those partial or exceptional reports. Both these features go against honest reporting.
>
> (Khan 1987: 272)

He continues: 'It is a fact that Urdu journalism –- Urdu journalism that is represented by Muslims in this country –- has been a product of reaction right from its beginning. All newspapers of Muslims have been started against some

Table 8.1 Regular items published in *Sehroza Dawat*

Items	*Pages*
Khabr-o-Nazr (News and Views)	1
Bela Tabsera (Without Comment)	1
Kisne Kya Kaha (Who Said What)	3
Mukhtasar Aham Khabren (Important News in Brief)	4
Deeni Tahriki Sargarmiyan (Religious Movement Activities)	4
Khutoot-o-Masaael (Letters and Problems; not regular)	5
Ads, mostly about its own publications (bottom half of the page)	6

Source: Based on author's content analysis of *Sehroza Dawat* from October 2001 to February 2002.

Khan is not alone in articulating this viewpoint. Raisuddin Faridi too holds the same opinion though he expresses it in a more nuanced way (Faridi 1987: 60). Most 'liberal' Muslim intellectuals that I met during my fieldwork in Aligarh also share Khan's viewpoint about the Urdu press. This liberal critique of the mainstream Urdu journalism is, however, considerably exaggerated, as it tends to simplify a rather complex story into a comprehensible whole. To say the least, it pays scant attention to other trends within Urdu journalism that were/are no less significant.[10]

Sehroza Dawat (henceforth SD; see Table 8.1) makes the first coverage of September 11 in its issue dated September 16. The column 'News and Views', written by the editor, first expresses surprise at the attack and wonders at the sheer inability of the US security system to pre-empt and check it. Then it speculates that those who carried out the attack must have strong grievances against the United States. And it is crucial to know them. However, the global media are not debating the reasons behind the attack. In other words, the United States ought to reconsider its policies. How correct is its unjust support of some countries and unreasonable hostility to others! It keeps on supporting its friends even if they indulge in crimes and opposes its 'enemies' who are not a threat to it at all but are rather its victims. It maintains a double standard on democracy: it is restless for its restoration in Burma but sternly opposed to it in Algeria.

In the end the column mourns the loss of innocent lives in the attack but with a subtle reminder. It says that it is painful to think about those killed and the sufferings of their dependants exactly in the same way when in the first Gulf War the United States killed 300 Iranians and again in the second Gulf War when it killed 400 Iraqis in a refugee camp in Baghdad – mostly the aged, women, and children. The column concludes with a question: is the American government still thinking in the old-fashioned way or has it undergone a shift after the recent events (PR 2001: 1)?

Titled 'Attack on America', the editorial says that right from the first moment Western experts have pointed their fingers at Osama Bin Laden for the attack even though Bin Laden himself has denied it. So has the Taliban government. In fact the Taliban said that Bin Laden did not possess such sophisticated technology and resources to carry out the attack. Yet, the whole Muslim world is being held responsible for it. Muslims are being projected as a militant, extremist, and conservative *Ummah* and as an enemy of the United States. Is it fair to label the entire *Ummah* as terrorist? As for the worldwide Muslim anger against the United States and celebration of the attack in some places by them, one ought to examine its reasons (SD, Editorial, September 16: 3).

The same issue carries the statement – headlined as 'It is not Proper to Get Demands Conceded through Wrong Acts' – of the Deputy President of JIH, M. S. Monis. While condemning the attack, he says that governments are also doing injustice. They should act justly and people should put forward their demands properly and correctly. Referring to 'Islamic terrorism', he says that it is a misleading phrase. Islam means only peace. Those who commit wrongs in its name are not justified. At the same time such acts are happening everywhere.

They are happening in Sri Lanka as well. Is it because of Islamic terrorism? The next issue (September 19) has on its front page an article sans any byline – 'Events in America are not what is being Projected; Reality Seems to be Different'. According to this anonymous writer, in the absence of any evidence the West's insistence that Muslims should condemn this act is akin to sharing the blame. The West is creating a guilt complex in Muslims. The forces opposed to Islam have thus declared their judgment even before any inquiry. The column 'News and Views' comments on a piece by K. P. S. Gill published in the Delhi-based English daily *The Pioneer* (September 13). Gill asks: why is it that whenever a terrorist act is committed the world concludes that it is the handiwork of Islamic terrorists? The columnist answers that it is because of a deep-rooted conspiracy. Forces defending racism (to SD this means Israel) and the hierarchy do not want Islam's real face revealed. This is indeed a clash of civilizations as identified by Huntington. It is not a mere coincidence that after the attacks on New York and Washington, there is a frontal assault on Islam from all sides. It is indeed the outcome of decade-long efforts. These forces (enemies of Islam) first spread violence through their agents and then pass the buck onto Muslims. It is very likely that the same forces are behind September 11 (PR 2001a: 1).

Continuing the 'Jewish Hand' thesis, the issue dated September 22 carries a front-page story 'Attack on America has Sidelined Palestinian Issue: Was this its Objective?' The story details the history of Israel's illegal creation on the holy land of Palestine and how the United States, the former USSR, and Britain wholeheartedly supported this racist design. The creation of Israel, says the anonymous commentator, was itself an act of international terrorism. Of late, there has been a serious effort to resolve the Palestinian issue. The commentator indirectly suggests that the attack on America was meant to sideline it (SD, September 22: 1).

Another article – 'Objectives and Consequences of Attack on American Cities' – is more direct in blaming Israel, however. It says that no Muslim group in the world including Bin Laden has the resources and technology to cause devastation on such a big scale. Only Jews and the Israeli secret service, Mossad, have. In the United States Jews are the most powerful, organized group. Through them Mossad has also penetrated the US Administration. The reason why Jews could be behind the attack is because they are against a better alternative Islamic system emerging. In case it comes up, it will mostly harm the Jews who dominate the current world economy and are custodians of Israel. To tarnish the image of Islamic movements the Jews will go to any extent. For long-term objectives, they can even kill their own people as indeed they have done in the past (Arshad 2001: 6).

In the issue dated September 25 half of the first page carries a story titled 'Why America is Fighting An Imagined Enemy, Not The Real One?' Like many other previous stories, this one is again anonymous. The commentator asks: does America really think that Bin Laden and Muslims are responsible for September 11? Is it innocent enough not to know the reality? The answer is no. According to the commentator, the United States knows too well that Muslims are not

responsible for September 11 and that it is lying to the world. The reason for this is that if it tells the truth not only its economy but also its entire political system will collapse, because the forces actually responsible for the attack control almost every sphere of American life. In a way they have taken the United States as hostage. Who are these forces? They are none other than Jews who are taking revenge against the United States for some reason and inciting it to declare a war on Islam. The commentator offers four reasons for it.

First, in the last presidential election Jews had supported Al Gore because he had named a Jew as his deputy. By contrast, American Muslim citizens had supported George W. Bush and therefore he also had the moral support of the Muslim world at large. Second, Bush did not induct any Jew into his Cabinet. Third, Bush was taking the US economy in a direction detrimental to Jewish interests. Finally, the United States was seriously pressurizing Israel to resolve the Palestinian issue for good. For these reasons Jews were opposed to Bush. They have taken revenge against him through these attacks. The strongest evidence of their involvement is the fact that 4000 Jews working in the World Trade Center were absent on that fateful day.[11] Yet, the entire global media are against Islam. Bush and his friends are well aware of these facts. However, since their life force is in the clutch of the Jews they are unable to tell the truth to the world and have instead launched a global war against an imagined enemy (SD, September 25: 1).

The subsequent issue, September 28, has an interesting commentary on Colin Powell's interview with the BBC (September 22) in its column 'News and Views'. Powell says that the United States is committed to erasing terrorism form the entire world. He also mentions a few examples such as Kashmir, Northern Ireland, the Basques, and Colombia. Powell's list, says the columnist, is obviously not only incomplete but also unfair. Powell never said: 'America is against all kinds of terrorism'. He cannot say this. Because if he does, it would also include state terrorism. Powell speaks for democracy but refrains from saying any word about democratic voices that are being routinely hushed up in Egypt and Algeria. The biggest truth that he suppressed altogether is Israel's terrorism. He did not mention the tyrannical secret agency of Israel, Mossad, whereas the world knows that Israel is the greatest terrorist state in the world. It also knows who is its main patron.

Colin Powell, opines the columnist, may be satisfied with his clarification but he can no longer fool the whole world. The world is not blind anymore. It is another matter that it is not speaking out because of American supremacy and its civilizational glitter. However, the moment American magic vanishes it will begin to say that the United States itself and its unjust policies are responsible for September 11. It is a great irony that the United States is calling the terrorists terrorized and the terrorized terrorists. In reality, if any community in the world today is terrorized, 'it is the Muslim *Millat*' being attacked in various countries. And Muslims' only crime is that they are longing for a total Islamic system. In some other countries their crime is that they are resisting attacks on their religious identity. But the US government does not notice such terrorism against Muslims (SD, September 28: 1).

In the issue following September 28, there begins a series of articles titled 'Clash of Civilizations'. Published in three installments (October 1, 4, and 7), it is written by a Canada-based author, Amar Sabit. Highly philosophical in tone, Sabit approvingly quotes Western authors like Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington. Sabit says:

> The multi dimensional conflict between Muslim world and secular West can only be resolved at the foundational levels of faith and ideology. … *Western thought is informed by rationalism, ir-religiosity, democracy, freedom, capitalism and human values*. This is its crux and fundamental civilizational identity. *On the other hand there is Islamic world or Muslim Ummah that introduces itself as an Ummah whose foundation is based on revelation*.
>
> (Sabit 2001: 2, emphases mine)

IV

Since *Radiance* is JIH's English organ, its reading of September 11 is in essence no different from SD. However, because of variations in the nature of readership and language its presentation, styles and sources are different. Unlike SD, its audience is not mainly JIH's members/sympathizers. It is rather the liberal, broad-minded non-Muslims and perhaps the well-meaning as well as 'ultra secular' Muslims. According to a staff member of *Radiance*, a major chunk of its copies goes to Gulf countries. For the Arabic-speaking Muslim heads of government and influential individuals, it serves as the only source of information on Indian Muslims. Consisting of twenty-eight pages, it has been regularly published from Delhi since 1963. It is a weekly and has five regular columns – 'Wisdom from the Quran', 'Pearls from the Prophet', 'Ideology', 'From Darkness to Light (stories of conversion to Islam)', and 'Letters to the Editor'. Its full name is *Radiance Viewsweekly*.

Radiance covers the September 11 event first in its issue dated September 16–23. It publishes excerpts from an article – 'Who did it? The Israelis and American Zionists?' – by M. Amir Ali, Managing Director of the Chicago-based Institute of Islamic Information and Education (*Radiance*, September 16–22: 16–7).[12] In Ali's view the air attacks required the latest technology, scientific know-how, deft coordination, and ample inside information. No Muslim group has those resources. Neither is it in their interest. 'The World has to come around,' he argues, 'to blame where the blame belongs – Israel' (ibid.: 17).

'Confusing Islam with Terrorism' is the cover story of the next issue. Calling the media's attempt to link terrorism with Islam 'mischievous', the author laments that no one is asking about the why and what of terrorism. If a survey were conducted vast section of Muslims would say that the tragedy that has struck the United States is the outcome of its own wrongdoings. If some people have rejoiced over the attack one should go into its reasons. The reason is that victims think that the United States should also taste what we have been tasting for long owing to its unjust policies. The author then tells readers who is responsible for the attack: 'Tel Aviv is the chief culprit. It is the Zionist influence on

Western capitals that is playing havoc. Sooner or later, and sooner the better, at least now the needle of suspicion should turn towards Israel' (Vasfi 2001: 6).

Two other news items also suggest that it was the handiwork of Jews – 'Israeli Connection in Terror Attacks Revealed' and '4000 Israeli WTC Employees Absent on September 11' (*Radiance*, September 23–29: 14–15). In the same issue there are several pieces, most of them reproduced, critical of American policies: 'Defense is a Thin Cover for Militarization of Space' by Noam Chomsky, 'US Risks a Severe Miscalculation' by William Beeman (Brown University), 'Stop the Insanity Here' by Robert Jensen (University of Texas), and 'Our Hearts Call Out for Reconciliation, not Revenge' by David McRenolds (ibid.: 8, 9, 10–11, 13).

The cover story of the next issue (September 30–October 6) is 'Punish the Guilty, not the Suspect' by S. A. S. Vasfi. He says that despite Bin Laden's denial of non-involvement in the September 11 attack the United States seems to be hell bent upon punishing him. What is his crime? His only crime is that he disapproves of the US military's presence on the soil of Saudi Arabia, the nerve center of Islam. What does the US and its allies' insistence on punishing Bin Laden, then, mean? 'From this obduracy, we feel compelled to infer that it is a clash of faiths, not merely a clash of civilizations' (Vasfi 2001a: 6). Vasfi is extremely critical of US-friendly Arab states which have mortgaged themselves to the United States and in so doing have humiliated Islam. Hence his appeal to Arab and Muslim states to uphold Divine Guidance and face the tribulations. In the subsequent issue the lead story is titled 'Muslim World Stands Immobilized'. It asks why Muslim *Ummah* is not activated for the future of Afghanistan. It offers two reasons: the inertia of the Islamic world and paralysis of will. Exhorting Muslims to rise, it warns them 'if they don't hang together today, they shall be hanged separately tomorrow' (Vasfi 2001b: 6).

Bin Laden's innocence vis-à-vis the September 11 attack on the one hand and the Jewish Hand thesis on the other continue in both SD and *Radiance* even after the Americans released (on December 13) the videotape proving his complicity. *Radiance* does not even report the news of the videotape. Nevertheless, it persists with the Zionist conspiracy theory. Vasfi's article in the issue after December 13 asks: 'Is it not remarkably amazing that not a single Jew had been killed in the collapse of two towers where 4,000 Jews worked? … What does it say?' (2001: 39). His conclusion is straight and dead sure: Mossad and Jews are responsible for it. As proof he quotes Stern Intel that bases its opinion on American intelligence sources and sees Mossad's hand behind the attack. He also refers to Iranian President Khatami who echoes the Zionist design. The author does not find Mossad's involvement surprising. Zionists have done such acts repeatedly in the past. During World War II, says he, Zionists themselves sunk a ship carrying illegal immigrant Jews following Britain's refusal to allow them entry into Palestine. They did it in order to get world opinion on their side. In 1967 before the Israeli attack on Egypt they destroyed an American ship, the USS *Liberty* as it had monitored, well before the assault, Israel's readiness. They also destroyed Prince Edward Hotel in Baitul Maqdis (year of occurrence and other details are not given).

Unlike *Radiance*, SD covers the news of the videotape. Its response is along expected lines. Two weeks after its release, it carries a front-page story titled 'America's New Videotape Drama about September 11 Failed'. It does not have a byline. Neither is its source mentioned. The story begins with the comment that 'to justify and legitimize her attack on Afghanistan and prove Bin Laden as guilty, America released the videotape in Washington on December 13' (SD, January 1: 1). However, the world refuses to accept its authenticity. Those who are with the United States from day one are still supporting it whereas the unbiased and other circles see the videotape as a wholesale fraud. In electronic technologies voice can easily be changed. Moreover, if Bin Laden hatched the plan for September 11 why would he allow its recording to provide evidence? What is more, even if the tape is accepted as authentic, nowhere does Bin Laden accept the responsibility for the attack. And if the United States really has evidence why is it releasing it to the Jewish newspapers and TV channels rather than presenting it to a legal court? Sharing the doubt of Nasruddin Eisa, Secretary-General of Malaysia's Parti Islam SeMalaysia, the story ends by arguing that it is definitely forged through technological manipulation. Why did it take so long to release it after all?

One month later, SD reproduces a story from *Al-Mujtama*, an Islamic magazine published from Kuwait. The front page is titled 'Why Are The Real Culprits Behind Attacks on America Being Masked?'. It refers to Karl Cameroon's report on the web site of Fox News Channel in which the arrest of over sixty Israelis was reported. This report was soon withdrawn from the web site as it would have exposed the role of the Jewish lobby. In the report a Federal Bureau of Investigation official had stated: 'There is certainly some connection between the September 11 attack and the Jews. However, the evidence/argument is secret and I cannot make it public because it is absolutely secret' (SD, February 4: 1).

V

From the content analysis of SD in Table 8.1 and *Radiance* many interesting issues emerge for discussion. First, Muslims are portrayed as *victims*, not culprits. This is a picture that is radically at odds with the portrayal of Muslims by the mainstream Western media. In the reading of both SDand *Radiance* Muslims are not terrorists but terrorized. The West and the United States know too well that Jews are responsible for September 11, yet Muslims are being attacked and Islam's image smeared. And the reason for this Western hatred against Islam is that Muslims refuse to be assimilated into the West's cultural milieu. They desire instead an alternative Islamic system of their own. In Western perception this Islamic desire is a 'crime' and it therefore punishes Islamists. It has done so in Algeria and Egypt even though Islamists had won landslide victories in elections there. This shows how dubious is its commitment to democracy. It boasts of freedom and human rights but it denies them to Palestinians by blindly supporting Israel. Bereft of any principles, the West is thus presented as a hollow entity. It is no more than magic based on and sustained by sheer force. Islam is a superior alternative to it. *Radiance*'s editorial contends:

> Two very significant experiments have been made during the past century: socialism which has now become an insignificant footnote in history. … Capitalism is being experimented in Europe and America today. Its fundamental point is: affluence would transform beast into man. Is it happening? See their crime rate, divorce rate and breaking of families because of prevalent promiscuity. Is there any ray of hope? … Christianity, Judaism, Rationalism, affluence all seems to be admitting their failures. This fact devolves a greater responsibility on the shoulders of the Islamists who are in the possession of the last Divine Guidance. True the task is Herculean. But it is their moral, religious and human obligation. There is no short-cut to paradise.
>
> (Editorial, September 23–29: 3)

It is this moral superiority of Islam that the West is afraid of. Because of its innate brilliance Islam is morally conquering people of all faiths worldwide. As Husaini and others say, thousands have embraced Islam even after September 11 in the United States, including the Italian Ambassador to Riyadh. Fearful of its expansion, the West is trying to halt Islam's onward march by linking it with terrorism. It is a Jewish design – pure and simple.

Second, many scholars explain, following Edward Said's (1979) groundbreaking work, religious revivalism in terms of orientalist construction. It is often argued that revivalists appropriate 'the other' even as they claim to reject it. Along the same line Huntington's (1997) clash of civilization thesis has been criticized at best as a Western construct and at worst as Western propaganda. Such criticism, though useful, loses sight of the agency of social actors. Every undesirable phenomenon cannot simply be dismissed as mere construct or as only ascription by 'the other'. The self-perception is no less significant (van der Veer 1994). As evident from articles in both SD and *Radiance*, JIH does think that Islam and the West are two competing, nay conflicting, worldviews – the former based on revelation and the latter on freedom and rationality. Both the papers have clearly endorsed Huntington's thesis of clash of civilizations/faiths.

Third, and finally, the issues raised in the two papers seriously call into question the very constitution, nature, and practice of the public sphere as theoretically conceived in Western scholarship. In his classic book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Jurgen Habermas argues that the public sphere in Europe historically emerged only with the disintegration of feudalism and near eclipse of religion. Their dissolution was rather a prerequisite for 'critical–rational public debate'. It was in principle inclusive and free from the considerations of status or rank. Further, he regards the press as the pre-eminent institution of the public sphere (Habermas 1999 [1989]: 29, 36ff., 181).

For both SD and *Radiance* Western media as the pre-eminent institution of the public sphere have been far from critical, rational, and inclusive in reporting September 11. They have instead worked as the mouthpiece of the Jews who, they think, control them. An article in *Radiance* argues how Jews are the culprits for September 11. The American establishment also knows it; yet Islam and Muslims are being blamed for it. This explains why:

> They (Americans) are led by the nose by a media that is dominated by the Jews. CNN belongs to a Jew and Larry King is a hardcore Zionist Jew. There is hardly any independent media in the US. … And even if there is what chance do they have to be really independent when even good old BBC succumbs to Jewish pressure?
>
> (Karim 2001: 14)

It follows, then, that the public sphere is neither inclusive nor above status and necessarily critical. It is controlled and monopolized by a given category of people to meet and further its own set of interests – religious, not secular, as Habermas would have us believe. In the perception of JIH's organs media as a vital institution of the public sphere, e.g., CNN and the BBC, are so thoroughly dominated by the Jews that there is no space whatsoever for a Muslim viewpoint there. The public sphere is thus religiously exclusive rather than secularly inclusive.

What it also illustrates is that the public, in the reading of *Radiance* and SD, is not a homogeneous, undifferentiated whole but rather clearly split along religious lines – Jews and Muslims. Conceptually, this point has a larger implication. It means that if public and by extension society at large are hierarchical and socially differentiated in matters economic, religious, gender, and cultural it is only romantic to assume, as Habermas does, that these differences, cleavages, and hierarchies would simply evaporate in the public sphere and that the so-called critical and rational argument would remain untouched by their dynamics. This differentiated, hierarchical, gendered, and power-informed idea of society also implies multiplicity of public spheres. If a powerful group has its own public sphere and excludes its 'other', those excluded and rendered marginalized from it would necessarily forge their own public sphere. In other words, the idea of public sphere, argue Negt and Kluge (1993),[13] logically entails the notion of counter public sphere in the same fashion as 'nationalism creates other nationalisms – religious, ethnic, linguistic, secular' (van der Veer 1996: 14–15).

Habermas may explain JIH's criticism of the Western public sphere in terms of its refeudalization or degeneration as indeed the second half of his book exactly deals with this aspect. He may also explain this as undesirable intrusion of faith into it. For SD it is precisely the opposite, however. The column 'News and Views' of September 25 extensively comments on why Indian journalists are so hostile to Muslims and are following the United States in defaming Islam (PR 2001b: 1). They do so because they are bereft of faith, *Imaan*. And faith alone fosters honesty and true sense of justice. Where worldly success becomes the yardstick of human achievement there cannot be any honesty. And it is only Islam that infuses honesty and justice among its believers. For Habermas, whereas the public sphere and critical, rational debate develop and flourish on the ruins of religious edifice, for SD a truly just public sphere can grow and flower only on a religiously ethical foundation of Islam.

The above self-righteous posture of JIH raises a crucial question: Does its

singular claim to honesty imply foreclosing of other sources of ethics and honesty? If the Western public sphere is biased in favor of the Jews and not independent, as so clearly argued by JIH, what is its own notion of public debate? Does it believe in the principle of open public discussion basic to liberal democracy? In the ultimate analysis, the answer is perhaps no. I say 'perhaps no' because it has not publicly debated this issue so far. However, if one were to infer from its position on other issues, it unambiguously shows that when in power it would barely allow freedom of debate or open profession and propagation of faiths – secular or religious. Many members of JIH and SIO believe that the Taliban government was right in preventing the missionaries in Afghanistan from propagating Christianity. But should not the Christian missionaries too have the right to propagate their religion in Afghanistan as Muslims have in India? No, they do not have. Their religion is false. A truly Islamic government, like the Taliban, therefore can never permit the propagation of falsehood. The word false includes every religion or worldview other than Islam – Islam as interpreted by them only.

In India JIH's position is markedly different, however. It is still far from its desired goal of *Iqamat-e-Deen*, which it seeks to bring about in a predominantly un-Islamic society through *Dawat*, ceaseless propagation of Islam among non-Muslims, which entails the processes of dialogue and public debate. As a matter of fact JIH employs exactly Habermas's phrase – public opinion – as the chief means through which it intends to achieve its ultimate objective. Its Constitution reads: 'and thus [Jamaat-e-Islami Hind] shall train *public opinion* in order to bring about the desired righteous revolution in the social life of the country' (*Constitution of the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind* 1995: 7, emphasis mine).

VI

To conclude, I wish to add a coda to this chapter that was originally rewritten in June 2002. Since then the world had witnessed tremendous, unprecedented changes. The war on Iraq by the US-led 'coalition of the willing' stands out as the most important one. How have JIH's organs responded to it? Is there any substantive change in their approach to the current world event when compared to September 11? The answer is a resounding 'No'.

As evident from the preceding pages, JIH sees the Western media and their public debate as biased in favor of the Jews and hostile to Muslims and Islam. Muslims are *terrorized* rather terrorists. It is Jews, not Muslims or Bin Laden and his network, who are responsible for the September 11 attack on the United States. The 'Jewish Hand' thesis does not change in case of war on Iraq. It remains. But now Christians are also held responsible as going the whole hog with the Jews and the Zionists. Colonial–imperial desire of the United States and Britain is also added to it. Indeed American colonial–expansionist design, almost under-discussed in its issues published soon after September 11, is highlighted.

In its issue dated March 2–8, 2003, *Radiance* carries Noam Chomsky's article 'Ruling by Force'.[14] Derived from the talk the author gave at the World Social

Forum in Brazil, Chomsky deals with the imperialist design of the United States and how it seeks to dominate the world by sheer force, unmindful of international laws and norms. It shows the double standard of the US policies. The second installment of Chomsky's article is published in the subsequent issue and elaborates the argument made in the first one. In its issue dated March 23–29, *Radiance*'s editorial dubs the United States and Britain as 'neo-imperialists menacingly flexing their muscles' (Editorial, 2003: 3). In the same issue Stephen Gowans' article, 'UN Authorization cannot Make Rank Imperialism Just', is published.

The cover story of the issue dated March 30–April 5, 'The Moment of Untruth' by S. A. S. Vasfi, underlines US colonial motives behind its invasion of Iraq. Dismissing the charge of terrorism against Iraq and Saddam Hussain, Vasfi says that the original 'roots of terrorism lie in Tel Aviv' (Vasfi 2003). 'Ugly Regime's Ugly War' by Stephen Gowans is another article in the same issue. In the following issue (April 6–12), the editorial 'Operation Iraqi Freedom or Enslaving Mankind' dwells on American 'naked aggression' of Iraq and its inherent nature of imperialism. The cover story by S. A. S. Vasfi deals extensively with the American invasion of Iraq. Titled 'Pax-Americana Starts from Iraq', he begins the story as follows:

> The neo-imperialist attack on Iraq has four objectives: Dominance over the world, Erasal of Islam, Control over West Asian Leadership … and Capture not only of the vast oil-reserves in the region, but those in the Central Asian Muslim states also. *The brain behind this strategy is the Jews rather Zionism*. The American President and the British Prime Minister *are only tools meant for the implementation of the Zionist plan*.
>
> (Vasfi 2003: 6, emphases mine)

To make readers believe the seriousness of this Zionist design, he further says, 'Don't mistake this as a part of a Muslim's wishful thinking or a piece of the peculiar Muslim mindset that holds Jews responsible for each and every problem they face in their day-to-day life' (ibid.: 6).

In the next issue (April 20–26) the Jewish design against Islam is further laid bare in an article 'Israelization of the USA and Its Danger to Mexico' by Hector Carreon. It is as much about the US–Mexican relations after the Rancho San Cristobal Summit between George Bush and Vicente Fox Quesada, Mexico's President, as about the US approach towards Muslims and the role of Jews. It highlights the nefarious role of the 'Zionist Cabal' within the Bush Administration as the main architects of war on Iraq. 'Israel's 35-year occupation of Palestine', contends Carreon, 'enabled the Jewish state to perfect tactics that US troops needed in "house to house" combat in Baghdad (Iraq)'.

Politics, not poetry, is the subject matter of *Radiance*. It rarely publishes poems. In the issue under discussion, it carries a poem by S. Akhtar. Titled

'Bush Requires a Deadly Push', it is imbued with religious imagery and metaphor and extremely interesting to read:

Bush is behaving like an intoxicated bull
His glass of arrogance has become shamelessly full
Dancing madly, he is displaying his devilish thorns
Requiring a David to hold him by horns
The satanic show of his armour
Shows he is in need of another Pearl Harbour
On God's earth, vast and wide
What a baby Bush is going to decide?
It is Almighty God Who will very soon decide
Who should manage His earth and who must step aside.

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Notes

1 This section is based on field notes. I conducted fieldwork for my doctoral dissertation, on Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, in Aligarh between October 2001 and October 2002. Aligarh is internationally known for Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) and nationally for locks. It is a city with a Muslim population of over 40 percent. It is widely believed that AMU is the unofficial leader of Indian Muslims. What AMU thinks the entire Muslim community accordingly acts. As a movement of educated Muslims, JIH and SIO have always tried hard to establish their hegemony over AMU and transform it into the backbone of what they describe as 'Islamic revolution'.
2 'Establishment of Islamic state' sums up the main ideas of Maududi. For his ideology, see Syed Vali Reza Nasr (1994, 1994a) and Irfan Ahmad (1998).
3 It is controversial whether Maududi really supported the demand for Pakistan or not and that his criticism of the Muslim League and its leader Mohammad Ali Jinnah was against the demand per se or their vision of future Pakistan. But overwhelming evidence shows that he did. For details see Syed Vali Raza Nasr (1994), particularly chapter 5. It is interesting to note here that in India JIH highlights Maududi's opposition to the Muslim League and Jinnah.
4 There is no difference in essence between *Hukumat-e-Ilahiya*and *Iqamat-e-Deen*. The difference, if any, is more terminological than ideological.
5 The headquarters of JIH in New Delhi gave me these figures (on July 29, 2002).
6 SIO headquarters in New Delhi provided these figures for me.
7 For a detailed analysis of the formation, ideology, and practices of JIH, see Irfan Ahmad (1998).
8 Technically, it would be incorrect to call it a biweekly. In a month it has ten issues, published on 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 25, and 28 of every month based on the Julian calendar. Interview with Parwaz Rahmani, Edior of *Sehroza Dawat*.

9 Abdus Salam Khurshid's (1963) book is one of the best for understanding the history of Urdu journalism. It covers the period from 1822 up to 1947. See also Nadir Khan's (1987) work; it deals with the developments in Urdu journalism between 1822 and 1857. For a synoptic account of post-1947 developments in India, see Anwar Ali Dehlvi (1987).
10 For the latest overview of the Urdu press see Mushirul Hasan (1994).
11 According to a member of SIO, the Jews were standing near the Twin Towers and rejoicing while they were crumbling. He told me that this news was published in a leading daily. When asked he could not name the newspaper, however. Field note.
12 The source of the article is not mentioned.
13 I am thankful to Biswajit Das for this reference. From a Marxist framework Mike Hill and Warren Montag (2000) have recently offered a critique of Habermas in *Masses, Classes, and the Public Sphere.*
14 The data for this section are drawn only from *Radiance* published between March 2–8 and April 20–26.

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9 The WTC tragedy and the US attack on Afghanistan

The press joins in beating the war drums

Tjahjo Purnomo Wijadi[1]

Media realities of the September 11 tragedy and the US military attack on Afghanistan are not identical in empirical realities because they involve issues of being factual (accuracy and completeness of facts), being impartial (balance of sources), and frames (exposure and concealment of facts). Media realities easily become subjective realities of those parties in a position of making war unless the media intentionally choose the orientation of peace journalism.

The present study of two Indonesian leading dailies, *Jawa Pos* and *Kompas*, shows that they differed in their orientation of covering the WTC tragedy and the US attack on Afghanistan. *Jawa Pos* tended to cover the issues in warlike journalism. It even made some simulations of war. *Kompas*, on the contrary, tended to be oriented toward peace journalism.

The 415 meter and 110 floor twin towers of the World Trade Center (WTC),[2] Manhattan, New York, were burned and destroyed in minutes after two commercial airliners, from American Airlines and United Airlines, hit the building on the morning of September 11, 2001.

This tragedy was estimated to have killed 266 people, with 4763 missing and 4000 injured. Thirty minutes after the WTC was destroyed, an American Airlines Boeing 757 hit the western side of the Pentagon, the headquarters of the US Department of Defense in Washington, DC, and killed 64 people.[3]

Osama bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda group were suspected by the US government as the masterminds of the WTC attack.[4] US President George W. Bush stated that the US and its allies would fight against Osama and all countries protecting and supporting terrorism. The US war machine moved toward Afghanistan, a country controlled by by the Taliban regime that protected Osama.[5]

The US plan to attack Afghanistan in revenge for the terrorist acts faced protests from people in many Moslem countries, including Indonesia. The protesters argued that the United States did not have obvious proof of Osama's involvement. Some Moslems, including thirty-two Islamic movements in Indonesia, called for *jihad* to help Afghanistan, interpreting the US president's statement of crusade and calling the name of the military attack on Afghanistan 'Operation Infinite Justice' as a war confrontation of the Islamic world.[6]

Various demonstrations which were carried out in the spirit of Islamic solidarity

turned into anti-American demonstrations. In Indonesia, some demonstrators demanded that their governments boycott American products. They also destroyed some business premises 'related to' the United States, and conducted 'sweeping' – an action intended to expel US citizens from Indonesia.[7]

On October 7, 2001, the United States, backed by the United Kingdom – and including the Afghan Northern Alliance (an opposition group in Afghanistan) – began a military attack on Afghanistan in a secret mission named 'Operation Enduring Freedom', since the Taliban regime refused to release Osama bin Laden. B-2 and F-18 warplanes targeted and fired missiles at military buildings and facilities in some Afghan cities.[8]

The military attack resulted in an anti-American reaction in Indonesia. In Jakarta and other cities (Surabaya, Bandung, Solo, Makassar, and Medan), thousands of people and many Islamic organizations went to the US embassy and consulates yelling that the real terrorists were the United States and Israel. The demonstrations were also colored with the burning of the American flag. At the same time, Majelis Ulama Indonesia (Indonesia Ulama Council) demanded that the Indonesian government suspend its diplomatic relations with the United States.[9]

Indonesian President Megawati Soekarnoputri, speaking at the commemoration of Isra Mi'raj in Istiqlal Mosque, October 15, 2001, stated that the Indonesian government disagreed with any attack on another country as a way to seek or catch terrorists. Although President Megawati did not mention explicitly any country's name, people in Indonesia easily knew what she meant.[10]

All the facts about the destruction of the WTC building, the psyops, and the US military attack on Afghanistan became the 'main menu' of print media news in Indonesia. In the case of the September 11, 2001 tragedy, like the 1990 Gulf War, the mass media were also accused of triggering the war. The news the media produce, despite being based on facts, is no longer an objective truth but a hyper-reality. [11]

What is to be uncovered?

The present study does not aim to test or examine the truth of social facts of war/violence covered by the print media. Rather it attempts to find out the tendency in orientation of the news releases about the attacks on the WTC and the US military attack on Afghanistan (media facts). The study was conducted to answer the question, 'Is the print media news oriented toward "who wins", or has it been transformed gradually to achieve a peaceful resolution?' In other words, 'Do the news releases of the print media tend to be directed to peaceful or war journalism?'

Most of current journalism ignores the most important part of the story, which is how conflict can be transcendental. This is the main thesis of Johan Galtung,[12] a peace supporter who tirelessly campaigns for the need for the media to foreground humanitarian aspects when covering violent conflicts. Galtung sees that many media cover conflict as if they were making a report on a

spreading disease, which does not consider the treatment and therapy. Can a report on the spread of cholera, for example, be considered complete if the journalist simply describes briefly the suffering of the sick, reports the number of dead bodies, but leaves out everything that might bring the epidemic to a halt? The answer is difficult.[13]

In covering violence and conflict in war, like covering violence at a sporting event, a journalistic would be failing to do his or her job if he or she did not inform the readers or the public of the various alternatives that may be able to reduce the suffering and solve the conflict. Galtung believes that it is important to help journalists to be more sensitive in viewing events in a more comprehensive manner, and more accurate in reporting.[14] Peace journalism was introduced by Johan Galtung. The idea behind it was first introduced at a summer workshop entitled 'Conflict and Peace Journalism' in Taplow Court, Buckinghamshire, England, August 25–29, 1997. Some journalists, media academics, and students from Europe, Asia, Africa, and America were engaged in intensive discussion and came up with the Peace Journalism Option.[15]

The document codifies the 'laws' of peace-oriented media coverage. The underlying assumption is that the discourse of media facts can lead events to one of two poles of opposing orientations: peace or war. Peace journalism supporters are convinced that peace is an alternative against war. The thesis puts forward how a conflict might be transcended by practicing a journalistic genre that foregrounds the appropriate alternative solutions to control the conflict and to alleviate the victims' suffering before anything else. Besides reporting facts on the conflict, says Galtung, the job of peace journalists is to unveil the question of who wins and how the situation may be changed gradually. Why does the conflict occur? Who is involved in the conflict? What are the goals of those involved? What are the roots of the conflict, and the structural, cultural, and historical background?

The missing fact

Galtung is convinced that unreported facts are as important as reported facts. The task of a good journalist is not just to report facts, but also to highlight the missing facts in the story. The old saying 'the first victim of war is the truth' is only partially true. The first victim is peace, and the second is truth.[16] The search for the loss of truth cannot be applied just to interstate conflicts, but also to local issues of violence, such as rape and wife beating, child abuse, racial or ethnic and class conflict.[17]

Peace journalism attempts to map a conflict before it turns into violent actions, to identify the parties in the conflict, and to trace the roots of the conflict to open up space for dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution. To humanize people is the main idea of peace journalism, supported by activities to document all the invisible suffering and the peaceful initiatives of all the parties to the conflict. The practice of such journalism is considered as providing a means to empower the non-elite, since every statement made by the elite has an impact on various aspects of people's daily lives, be they visible or invisible.

In many cases, the media tend to foreground aspects of direct violence rather than cultural violence and structural violence. The media often capture direct violence when it contains visible facts, such as physical damage, number of people injured or dead, the destruction of infrastructures (roads, electricity, telecommunications, health, and education), the isolation of conflict location, and the destruction of cultural heritage. The media seem to underestimate the invisible effects, by not reporting or minimizing news on the loss of human dignity, personal suffering (trauma, depression, revenge), the destruction of social structures (government institutions, law and order, human rights), and the loss of peaceful conflict resolution culture. Cultural violence closely relates to the totality of assumptions and views preserved through myth, heroism, or patrioism. On the other hand, the repressive/exploitative, penetrative, segmented, and exclusive life indicates that there is a structural violence.[18]

The violence concept forwarded by Galtung is extensive and based on human rights. Every individual and person has the right of self-realization and the right for personal growth not subject to be uprooted or deprived by anyone. Violence occurs when people are shaped in such a way that their physical and mental realization is below their potential realization. The degree of potential realization is what is likely to be realized according to the stage of perspective, resources, and progress accomplished in an individual's era.[19]

By defining violence in such a way, Galtung wants to convince us that violence has not only its physical dimension, but also a psychological one. When violence is limited to a concept as narrow as the destruction of somatic ability or the wiping out of life by murder as the extreme form committed by those who intend to do so, and if peace is the antithesis, there will be too little to refuse in the effort to adhere to peace as an ideal. Violence is not only robbery, torture, and murder, or any other physical maltreatment, but also lying, indoctrination, threat, oppression, and the like, blocking the actualization of someone's mental and thinking potential. Galtung uses the words 'hit and hurt' to point out that violence may be physical and psychic.[20] The mass media also have an opportunity to become actors of psychological and symbolic violence.

Galtung expresses the peace journalism concept in six groups of basic questions. First, what is the conflict about? Who are the parties and what are their real goals? Who are the parties involved in the conflict arena where the violence, if any, takes place? Second, what are the deeper roots of the conflict, the history of its structure and culture? Third, what kind of ideas are offered by one party to the other, particularly creative, new ideas? Can such ideas be sufficiently powerful to prevent violence? Fourth, if violence occurs, how can such invisible effects as trauma and hatred be viewed, and do the effects become a reason for revenge and for obtaining glory? Fifth, who is working to prevent violence, what are their visions of conflict outcomes, their methods, and how can they be supported? And sixth, who initiates reconstruction, reconciliation, and resolution, and who is reaping benefits like reconstruction contracts?[21]

All the questions implicitly aim to change the peace journalism assumption, from 'who wins' to 'how the situation is transformed gradually to peaceful resolu-

tion'. This approach is suitable as a tool to see the political conflict spectrum, because it can wake up skeptical readers of media coverage that tends to cite official sources. But if the journalist tends to uncover visible facts and does not have a commitment to preserving the social order, he or she can be trapped into reporting information from political elites and official sources that often aim to incite conflict, violence, or war.

Seen in a dichotomist spectrum – peace journalism versus war journalism – peace journalism coverage tends to be developed on the basis of news values that explore conflict formation (x parties, y goals, z issues) and focused on getting a win–win solution for all parties in the conflict. Space, time, and causes are opened up widely in terms of history and culture to end the conflict and to arrive at a peaceful agreement. Conflict/war/violence is seen as a common human problem, so the coverage is aimed at making conflicts transparent by putting forward the views of all parties, being emphatic, and understanding the problem.

Some creative measures from all parties to end the conflict become the main concern of coverage, and it sees the use of force to end the conflict as negative. Humanistic aspects of all conflicting parties are chosen as the facts to be exposed, especially the invisible effects of violence like trauma and grief that destroy a society's structure and culture.

On the contrary, war journalism tends to reduce conflicting actors to only two parties (friend and enemy), each fighting to achieve victory. It pictures war as occurring in a closed time and space (conflict causes and solutions are limited to the conflict arena), and it enthusiastically pursues the one who triggered the conflict.

In addition, war journalism also uses 'us versus them' spectacles. It always positions 'them' as the problem maker. Therefore, it makes use of news as a means to shape perceptions, to manipulate awareness, and to mobilize actions fitted to a certain party (propagandist). It sees the use of force as legal, and as a reactive means to defend/save themselves. It uses the momentum of the outbreak of war or violence as a standpoint to start reportage, since it is stuck on the visible violence effects (dead bodies, and/or conflict arena destruction).

Disclose lying

Seen from a truth-oriented aspect, peace journalism aims to disclose or uncover the lies of both sides, or uncover the masks of all sides. On the contrary, war journalism is oriented toward propaganda. The focus is on exposing 'their' lies and on covering 'our' lies, by revealing the ideological motives of violence. This eventually suggests that one side is an enemy image, demonstrates how violent acts are 'improper', and reduces the historical perspective to uncover the hidden agenda of a certain party.

The spirit of peace journalism is to develop people-oriented coverage. Such orientation focuses on the suffering of men, women, children, and the elderly; strengthens the voice of the voiceless; uncovers all procedural mistakes; and

pushes all parties to make peace. Peace journalism's method of coverage is contrary to elite-oriented war journalism that is eager to expose 'our' suffering'; to ascribe mistakes to 'them'; and to position itself as the mouthpiece of the elite indulging in statements that lead to violent acts.

Peace journalism holds that non-violence and creativity prevent and solve conflict/violence and are the primary ways to reach peace. Peace journalism accentuates peace initiatives, so that the conflict does not spread and become violence. Intensive coverage is focused on the structure, culture, and peace of the society which need to be achieved together. If the conflict/violence ceases, coverage tends to focus on efforts of resolution, reconstruction, and reconciliation.

On the contrary, war/violence journalism considers that a peaceful situation (the end of the conflict) can be admitted when there is a ceasefire and its party has gained victory. It does not pay attention to peaceful efforts and initiatives before its party gains victory. It prefers to uncover agreements, institutions, and the 'controlled' society. When war/conflict ends, the media go on to seek issues so that violence recurs. War journalism needs a clear view of who wins and who loses (zero-sum game), and ignores peace initiatives from the other party or third party, particularly the non-violent solution, because it considers such initiatives as reducing the totality of the victory of 'our' side.[22]

Jake Lynch assumes that the peace journalism concept is a new way of looking that uses media coverage to develop a process of dialogue to attain, not to block, peace. Therefore, the analysis and transformation of conflict should be based on reportage emphasizing accurate and just sociological facts and various perspectives.[23]

There are no major differences between current good journalism and peace journalism. Peace journalism not only focuses just on the disease, but also looks for possible cures. Peace journalism not only reduces human suffering, but also provides a more realistic image of what is going on in the world. Everything is changing. Even the military gets involved in peacekeeping. Education no longer belongs to the privileged elite. There are many people who get better information than the elite and democracy provides them with the right to participate in matters affecting them.[24] Peace journalists can confront a strong party by asking the right questions: how long will this illness last? What alternative therapies are available to avoid expensive costs and painful surgery, such as open-heart surgery or electric shock treatment? What kind of help is needed during the healing process? How long will the illness cause patients to remain invalids? What is the cost of this? Peace journalists are not limited to international events, but they should raise questions at all levels of government – what governments do not do to solve poverty, hunger, violence, or environmental degradation – and then question them as to why they do not do more. Peace journalists will not be satisfied to get answers such as 'no funds' or 'no alternatives'. A simple guideline to find the real facts behind the story is to look for those who have been marginalized or excluded; they usually can be trusted to expose plenty of alternative ideas. In times of conflict, peace journalism has a golden opportunity to appeal

to 'lost' readers, because its coverage positions readers' views as equal to the elite's. Peace journalism accommodates the hopes of readers or viewers. Its coverage is eager to develop critical views by way of questioning – something neglected by war journalism. Automatically, according to Lynch, such coverage refuses the propagandist method which configures a conflict based on a binary opposition that draws a dichotomous line between 'we' and 'they'. By using that, the content of the news will better able to offer various constructions to all parties. For example, peace journalism coverage could dig up peace initiatives from the grassroots. It could also make readers complete or counter the construction of officials or of the elite.

Such a process of news making presents an opportunity for journalists to 'counter' the main thinking of war construction. They can apply peace journalism ideas that view conflict/violence/war as a common human problem. The aim of this media coverage is to create a new effort among media people and readers to make the world a safer place.[25]

Leading newspapers in Indonesia

The research presented here is on the coverage of two leading newspapers in Indonesia, *Jawa Pos* and *Kompas*. *Jawa Pos* is one of the oldest newspapers in Indonesia, published in Surabaya. It was founded by the late The Chung Sen (an Indonesian Chinese) on July 1, 1946. In 1982, when the circulation was only 6800 copies and the paper almost bankrupt, it was bought by PT Grafiti Pers (Tempo Magazine Group). Since that time *Jawa Pos* has gradually been able to develop as a leading newspaper in Indonesia by claiming itself to be the 'national newspaper that is published in Surabaya'. This motto is an expression of opposition of local newspapers against those published in Jakarta. The central–local dichotomy at the time in Indonesia was obviously a product of the centralized New Order regime. Recently, *Jawa Pos* has become one of the press conglomerates in Indonesia, since it owns seventy publications. Its circulation now is about 300,000 copies. Its editorial policy is market and business oriented.

Kompas was founded on June 28, 1965, and published in Jakarta by the late P. K. Ojong (also an Indonesian Chinese) and Jakob Oetama. It was published on the initiative of Catholic journalists affiliated to the Catholic Party. When the Catholic Party was merged into the Indonesian Democratic Party in 1973, *Kompas* took a position as an independent newspaper. Nowadays, *Kompas* has become the biggest newspaper in Indonesia (circulation 500,000 copies) and the most influential one, managed by professional journalists. However, most Indonesians still consider *Kompas* as a newspaper affiliated to Catholics.

As leading newspapers, *Jawa Pos* and *Kompas* are assumed to be indicators of the print media trend in Indonesia, although the two have different editorial policies shaped by their market segments. *Jawa Pos* has its readers among the lower middle class, while *Kompas* is for those in the upper middle class. *Jawa Pos* is more oriented toward 'popular' journalism, while *Kompas* is considered to be an 'intellectual' newspaper.

The population in this case consists of all headlines on the WTC tragedy and the US military attack on Afghanistan published in *Jawa Pos* and *Kompas*. The samples were taken from the September 12 to October 11, 2001 editions (thirty editions in total). The selection of this period was based on the assumption that the period includes all reports on the destroyed WTC buildings, the US military attacks on Afghanistan, and the processes of the attacks. The reportage during this period is considered to represent 'the image' of the dailies.

The study is a discourse analysis combining qualitative and quantitative methods. To identify the orientation of reportage, we used Galtung's indicators (Table 9.1). The indicators are oriented in a dichotomist manner within four main groups: peace/conflict–war/violence; truth–propaganda; people–elite; and solution–win. The first words are indicators of peace journalism, while the second are indicators of war journalism.[26]

Galtung's Indicators

Peace/conflict journalism	*War/violence journalism*
Peace/conflict oriented:	War/violence oriented:
1 Explore conflict formation, x parties, y goals, z issues. General win/win orientation	1 Focus on conflict arena, 2 parties, 1 goal (win), war general zero-sum orientation
2 Open space, open time; causes and outcomes anywhere, also in history/culture	2 Closed space, closed time; causes and exits in arena, who threw the first stone
3 Making conflicts transparent	3 Making wars opaque/secret
4 Giving voice to all parties; empathy, understanding	4 'Us–them' journalism, propaganda, voice for 'us'
5 See conflict/war as problem, focus on conflict creativity	5 See 'them' as the problem, focus on who prevails in war
6 Humanization of all sides; more so the worse the weapons	6 Dehumanization of 'them'; more so the worse the weapon
7 Proactive: prevention before any violence/war occurs	7 Reactive: waiting for violence before reporting
8 Focus on invisible effects of violence (trauma and glory, damage to structure/culture)	8 Focus only on visible effect of violence (killed, wounded, and material damage)
Truth oriented:	Propaganda oriented:
1 Expose untruths on all sides	1 Expose 'their' untruths
2 Uncover all cover-ups	2 Help 'our' cover-ups/lies
People oriented:	Elite oriented:
1 Focus on suffering all over; on women, aged, children, giving voice to the voiceless	1 Focus on 'our' suffering; on able-bodied elite males, being their mouthpiece
2 Name all evil-doers	2 Name their evil-doers
3 Focus on people peacemakers	3 Focus on elite peacemakers
Solution oriented:	
1 Peace = non-violence + creativity	Victory oriented:
1 Peace = victory + ceasefire	
2 Highlight peace initiatives, also to prevent more war	2 Conceal peace initiatives, before victory is at hand
3 Focus on structure, culture, the peaceful society	3 Focus on treaty, institution, the controlled society
4 Aftermath: resolution, reconstruction, reconciliation	4 Leaving for another war, return if the old one flares up

Table 9.2: Headlines orientation: the WTC tragedy and the US attack on Afghanistan (*Jawa Pos*, *N* = 24; *Kompas*, *N* = 18), September 12–October 11, 2001

Peace/conflict journalism *Jawa Pos (%)*	*War/violence journalism* *Kompas (%)*	*Kompas (%)*	*Jawa Pos (%)*
Peace/conflict oriented:	War/violence oriented:		
8	67	33	92
Truth oriented:	Propaganda oriented:		
8	56	44	92
People oriented:	Elite oriented:		
12	67	33	88
Solution oriented:	Victory oriented:		
21	56	44	79

During its thirty editions (September 12 to October 11, 2001) *Jawa Pos* had the events of the WTC destruction and the US military attacks on Afghanistan as headlines a total of 24 times (80%), while *Kompas* had them 18 times (60%). In the first five days (September 12 to 16, 2001) *Jawa Pos* used its entire front page for reports on the WTC tragedy. In its September 17 edition, *Jawa Pos* carried a local news item with a war-nuanced title, 'In Madiun, the Military "at War" against the Police.' On the other hand, on September 12 *Kompas* provided three-quarters of its front page for news on the WTC tragedy and one full page on September 13, 2001. In its next editions, *Kompas* also carried sports news on its front page.

The difference in the number of headlines on the WTC tragedy and the US military attacks on Afghanistan and the allocation of the news to the front page suggests that *Jawa Pos* considered the events to have the highest news value (Table 9.2).

For nineteen days (September 12 to October 1, 2001) *Jawa Pos* headlined the WTC tragedy. The next six days (October 2 to 7, 2001) *Jawa Pos* did not report the tragedy, but put it as the headlines again for four days successively (October 8 to 11, 2001) as the United States started to attack Afghanistan on October 7, 2001.

The six-day break taken by *Jawa Pos* may indicate that it was 'tired' of waiting for the war to break out. Implicitly, the expression 'tiredness' (and also disappointment) emerged in the caricature *Clekit* on page 4, September 25, 2001. In the cartoon, which depicts Osama bin Laden face to face with a US tank, 'Clekit' (the name of the caricature) says, 'Just Bluffing! Too Long to Wait …' (Figure 9.1). This caption represents *Jawa Pos*'s attitude rather than Osama's.

Figure 9.1: Picture of Osama Bin Laden from the newspaper *'Jawa Pos'* dated September 25, 2001

From September 14, 2001 (the third day), *Jawa Pos* started signaling the outbreak of war by establishing a discourse of, or simulating, war. Its headlines were presented as 'opposing' the United States and the Taliban by focusing on the US attempts to take revenge and the Taliban's confrontational attitude. This particular angle can be seen from the choice of words and sentence in its headlines. Good examples are: 'Who is going to be the target of U.S. revenge? Afghanistan …' (September 14); 'U.S. plan to attack Afghanistan continues to be fully developed …' (September 15); 'U.S. has made a firm decision: war! That's the result of Congress meeting yesterday' (September 16); 'America is bluffing. Afghanistan is not scared. America makes use of Pakistan, Afghanistan does not give a damn. So, the situation is predictable: super-hot. War or … Hand over Usamah bin Laden. The world is waiting. Who will start?' (September 17); 'Afghanistan fully prepared to confront U.S. attacks' (September 18).

The war simulation is also reflected in the titles that *Jawa Pos* used from the third day (September 14, 2001) as Table 9.3 indicates.

Jawa Pos's 'tiredness' of waiting for the outbreak of war can also be seen in its September 20, 2001 edition (the ninth day) when it again used the serif [27] font for its headlines. In its previous editions (September 12 to 19, 2001) it had changed the font of its headlines to sans serif printed in capitals and bold. On September 12 the title 'Doomed America!' was written in red as wide as the page (seven columns). *Jawa Pos* tends to package its war reportage as 'entertainment', just like video game programs, thus ignoring a sense of humanity.

Table 9.3 Headlines on the WTC tragedy and the US attacks on Afghanistan in *Jawa Pos* and *Kompas*, September 12–October 11, 2001

Jawa Pos	Date	**Kompas**
DOOMED AMERICA! • Thousands Killed • WTC Building Collapses • Pentagon Hit by Plane	September 12	**Terror Haunting the United States** Five Planes Crashed, the WTC Buildings Smashed
NEW YORK BECOMES A DEAD CITY • American People Agree to Take Revenge • U.S. Deny Attacking Kabul • 10–20 Thousand People Killed	13	**Thousands of People Suspected Killed** U.S. Declares a War Against Terrorists
US READY TO ATTACK AFGHANISTAN • NATO Disclose Attack Scenario • European Leaders Provide Support • Taliban Ask U.S. Not to Get Enraged	14	**G-7 Prepare U.S. $ Hundreds of Billions Package** To Prevent Global Recession
US WILL ATTACK VIA PAKISTAN • Minister of Defense Will Deploy 50 Thousand Soldiers • Military Experts Remind the US that They Will Face Difficulties	15	**Congress Agreed to US $40 Billions Package** Osama bin Laden an Official Prime Suspect
Congress Agree to War	16	**Putin: Asks the U.S. Not to Be Reckless**
AFGHANISTAN READY FOR COMBAT Given Three Day Ultimatum, Taliban Ignores	17	**U.S. Ready to Fight to the Utmost**
PREPARING NUCLEAR ATTACK Usamah Has Left Afghanistan, U.S. Assault Scheme Leaks	18	**Stock Prices in Wall Street Drop** Stocks Throughout the World Collapse
HAND OVER USAMAH DEAD OR ALIVE	19	

HAND OVER USAMAH DEAD OR ALIVE Seeking American Muslims' Sympathy, Bush Gave a Speech in Mosque	19	
U.S. Chooses War U.S. Suspects Israel?	20	**U.S. Expects RI Assistance**
War Is Getting Near Afghanistan Surrounded by 100 U.S. Jet Fighters	21	
Taliban Confronting Pakistan in Danger of Civil War, 4 People Dead	22	**Bush Asks the World to Wage War on Terrorism** Dr Juwono: Create a Fair Global Order
Taliban Shot Down US Aircraft **U.S. Worried** • Second Terror Attack with Chemical Weapons • The Aircraft Shot Down by Taliban Belongs to CIA	23 24	**Taliban Shot Down a Spy Aircraft**
Usamah Sent a Special Message	25	
War in Ten Days' Time	26	
U.S. Got the First Lesson	27	
Usamah Has 7 Hiding Places • Once about to Buy Nuclear Material •Pakistan Refused to Take Part in Attack	28	On Dealing with Anti-U.S. Actions **U.S. Ambassador Disappointed with RI Police**
Pakistan's Dalliance Fails Again	29	Government takes its Stand on Latest Developments **Societies Requested to Foreground Conscience**
Indonesian Talibans Arrive Wearing Kabli, Prepared to Die in Afghanistan	30	
Megawati Disappointed At Sweeping Threat against U.S. Citizens in Indonesia	October 1	President Megawati Arrives Home **Don't Frighten Foreign Visitors**
	5	Cabinet Meeting Five and Half Hours **Government Bans 'Sweeping'**
WAR BEGINS • Kabul and Kandahar Bombarded • Guided Missiles Launched from U.S. Warships	8	**U.S. and Britain Attack Afghanistan**

• Bush: Costs that Must Be Paid		
FOUR U.S. AIRCRAFT SHOT DOWN • Usamah Safe And Sound • Taliban: U.S. Will Suffer • U.S. Receives Reproaches	9	**UN Must Take Collective Measures**
USAMAH ESCAPED, U.S. UPSET	10	**Guided Missiles Hit a UN NGO Office**
IRAQ SHOT DOWN U.S. AIRCRAFT Pentagon Admitted	11	**National Interest More Principal**

Even death seems to have been regarded as aesthetics. This aspect is what Baudrillard calls 'the society of spectacle'.[28]

When the United States attacked Afghanistan, *Jawa Pos* again used the sans serif font for its headlines. The title 'War Begins' was printed in capitals, bold, and red. The use of red color may indicate that the event reported as a headline is an extraordinary event. As a result, the discourse of *Jawa Pos* headlines tends to be oriented toward war/violence. Out of twenty-four headlines, only two (8%) were oriented toward peace, and the rest (92%) toward war journalism. Its reportage seems to be reactive, waiting (impatiently) for the war to be covered. An atmosphere of 'provocation' is reflected in the diction of the headlines that tend to use the 'language of war'. Most of the *Jawa Pos* headlines seem to be oriented toward propaganda (92%), for instance uncovering 'their' lies and at the same time concealing 'our' lies. In addition, the reportage focused on the elite (88%), particularly on the claims of US and Taliban leaders. It also voices 'our' suffering, and associates actors of crime with 'them'. Finally, *Jawa Pos* headlines tend to be oriented toward the importance of victory (79%).

The discourse of war was presented by *Jawa Pos* by simply focusing on the violent aspects of the US military attacks on Afghanistan. An atmosphere of violence – both military and political actions of the US preparation for the attacks – was taken as the pillar of reportage. *Jawa Pos* tended to expose claims made by the US and Taliban elite that were intended to define who started the violence. In terms of propaganda, the reportage seems to view the US military attack on Afghanistan as a form of US arrogance over Islam, not as the US strategy to destroy Taliban military bases – let alone terrorism. Therefore, news in *Jawa Pos* is packaged within the perspective of 'who wins and who loses' and focused on the conflict areas, especially US military attacks that missed their targets and bombed civilian housing areas.

Doomed America!

The *Jawa Pos* headlines on the attack on the WTC and Pentagon buildings began with the title 'Doomed America!' The metaphor 'doomsday' seems to be

Jawa Pos's interpretation of the destruction of the WTC buildings, which it considered the 'doomsday' of the superpower.

A characteristic of war journalism reportage is the orientation toward violent events by simply focusing on visible or tangible results such as the loss of life, the collapse of the New York skyscrapers, the confusion of people trying to escape from the building, and damage to other buildings. The following excerpts illustrate this position:

> Did you watch Independence Day or King Kong or Godzilla or the Towering Inferno? The movies describe how New York skyscrapers are destroyed and collapse because they are struck by a giant gorilla, aliens, or because of huge fires.
>
> *Jawa Pos* journalist Ramadhan Pohan in Washington reported last night that such destruction happened yesterday. Much more worse in fact. The two highest WTC buildings in the US were on fire, collapsed and in an hour were razed to the ground because they were hit by a hijacked aeroplane. The 'Rambo' country then appeared doomed as depicted in the movie Independence Day.
>
> There is more. A Boeing 747 of United Airlines crashed in a suburb of Pittsburgh. The number of passengers aboard is not known yet.
>
> What was known is the number of those in the two planes hitting the twin WTC buildings in Manhattan, New York. The two planes were a Boeing 767 and 757 of American Airlines.
>
> How many lives have been claimed in the plane crashes? No one is sure yet. But, it is estimated the victims number more than 300 because CNN also has reported another commercial aeroplane heading for Washington being hijacked.

In addition, the dramatic reportage of *Jawa Pos* was also accompanied by expressions of empathy and concern from many sides and exposed humanity, an indicator of peace journalism. *Jawa Pos* showed that the WTC tragedy hurt not only the American people but also other people of the world:

> Not only are President George W. Bush and American citizens mournful. In Taiwan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed anxiety over the fate of its citizens doing business in WTC. Taiwan's five banks are operating in the building, said the Ministry's spokesman Chang Siao Yeah to AFP. Tokyo expressed the same concern about its citizens working at 20 Japanese companies in WTC. Japan's news agency NHK reports that most of the companies are banks and stock exchange branches, including Dai-Ichi

> Kangyo Bank (DKB) and Fuji Bank. DKB's 350 staff work on the 80th floor.

After the collapse of the WTC buildings, however, *Jawa Pos*'s reportage seemed to ignite American anger and confront it with Taliban opposition to generate the spirit of war. As a result, the reportage tended to become a 'horror show'. *Jawa Pos* news coverage was focused on the US statements, responses, reactions, and measures which connoted war, and ignored peaceful reactions and initiatives from a number of sides. For nineteen days *Jawa Pos* consistently chose the angle that a war between the United States and Afghanistan would break out by printing tendentious, and even insinuating, headlines. *Jawa Pos* emphasized the US accusation that an Islamic terrorist group led by Osama bin Laden were the actors behind the WTC destruction. It also reported the US statement of taking revenge on Osama who was said to be hiding out in Afghanistan. The reportage was then directed to US preparations to go to war against Afghanistan and the Taliban response to this threat.

One dominant news value existing in the reports on the US reactions to the WTC destruction was 'us versus them' journalism, a voice for 'US' propaganda. This is the way *Jawa Pos* confronted the United States and Osama bin Laden. Besides, *Jawa Pos* tended to focus on the US side's 'voice' only without confirming the other side's position as the rival or enemy.

Jawa Pos also indicated that the majority of US citizens considered the WTC destruction an act of war, and therefore agreed to take revenge, if the United States was able to find the terrorists:

> Almost all American citizens see the attack on the WTC building in Manhattan, New York, and the Pentagon headquarters as an act of war. According to a poll released by *CNN/USA Today/Gallup* yesterday, nine out of 10 American people are convinced. Most respondents also believe in Bush's ability to deal with the crisis.

Using the result of a poll, *Jawa Pos* aimed to make known the 'voice' developing in American society. The focus of reportage was on the United States, inspiring the American people and what they wanted regarding the attack on their country – that is, war.

The report also meant an overgeneralization as it says 'Almost all American citizens see the attack on the U.S. as an act of war.' The news even used a hyperbolic subheading 'American people agree on taking revenge', although only 'few Americans' responded (608).[29] This number is too small to make any generalization. Moreover, the sampling technique was not known. The expression 'almost all' also indicates doubt over the number of people who really made the statement, as it conceals the real mathematical number.

After reporting the American people's reaction, *Jawa Pos* covered the reactions and opinions of the US politicians who accused Osama of involvement.

The officials claimed that they had sufficient evidence of this, but *Jawa Pos* argued that there was not yet an official statement from the president:

> *Jawa Pos* journalist in Washington D.C. Ramadhan Pohan reports, U.S. officials are convinced that rich Saudi Arabian frequently involved in guerilla activities in Afghanistan Usamah bin Laden was involved in destroying WTC, Pentagon and in other plane crashes in Pennsylvania.
> U.S. officials also suspect that the Afghanistan government is hiding Usamah. Interestingly, although Usamah and Kabul have denied their involvement, the US remains convinced that they are directly involved.

After giving such an account, *Jawa Pos* attempted to neutralize the US accusation against Osama bin Laden by saying that the accusation could be wrong and could cause confusion because no supporting evidence had been offered. *Jawa Pos* then provided an illustration of a previous similar event, that is, the bombing of Oklahoma City. At the time the United States also made accusations against Islamic terrorists, but it became known later that the bomber was a white American, Timothy McVeigh.

In its news of September 14, 2001, entitled 'U.S. Ready to Attack Afghanistan' with its subheadings 'NATO Discloses Attack Scenario', 'European Leaders Provide Support', 'Taliban Ask the U.S. Not to Get Enraged', *Jawa Pos* confronted the two sides by making use of the contradicting positions of the United States and the Taliban where each accused the other of being guilty. The United States kept insisting that it had pieces of evidence of Osama's involvement in the September 11 attack. On the contrary, the Taliban accused the United States of being the real terrorists:

> U.S. Ministry of Justice official said Wednesday, there is some evidence indicating Usamah's involvement. …
>
> U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch said the FBI have a telephone conversation indicating Usama's involvement. German government spokesman said Wednesday secret agents of Germany, France, England, and Israel also consider that Usamah is related to the attack.
>
> 'What is the Taliban government's reaction?' They refused to extradite Usamah bin Laden. They also denied the report that there was a connection between Usamah and the attack last Tuesday.
>
> 'Attacked or not, we will not hand over Usamah,' said Taliban Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmed Mutawakil yesterday. He added, U.S. secret services are embarrassed for failing to protect their country from enemy's attack. 'They had to make a statement because they are responsible to the American people and Congress.'
>
> 'To conceal their failure, they have searched for a scapegoat. And Usamah is the person.' He stressed the Taliban view that Usamah has no

> logical capacity to plan the attack. The Taliban government also demanded that President George W. Bush not rush to attack Afghanistan.

Jawa Pos also reported that George W. Bush had full authority and unanimous support from the Congress and Senate to utilize US$40 billion. It just needed Bush's instruction for the war to start as indicated by the headline 'Congress Agree to War', on September 16, 2001. This American scheme to take revenge is reported to be conducted by fair means or foul. The sentence 'We will chase and beat you' suggests that the planned revenge would show no mercy, and the key to the war was in Bush's hands.

In its news reports, *Jawa Pos* seems to have emphasized American anger by the use of euphemistic vocabulary. In its report entitled 'Hand over Usamah Dead or Alive' on September 19, 2001, for instance, it exposed American (Bush's) anger with Osama bin Laden and its demand to hand over Osama dead or alive:

> Hand over Usamah, dead or alive! That's what the US yesterday demanded from Afghanistan. The demand which seems impossible to be fulfilled by the Taliban government was made by the U.S. via Pakistan. Pakistan, however, gave a three-day deadline. And today is the last day. Will the U.S. wait for the deadline? Only President George W. Bush knows. *Jawa Pos* journalist in Washington DC, Ramadhan Pohan reported last night, the furious superpower indicates they will use any means to catch Usamah. 'No rules. What is important is the U.S. captures him', stressed Bush.

Questioning what would happen after the deadline, *Jawa Pos* asked its readers to guess what measures Bush would take – and directed their minds to the outbreak of a big war. This can be seen from an answer given by *Jawa Pos* in its sentence 'furious superpower indicates they will use any means to capture Usamah' US resentment against Afghanistan was described as reaching a climax. To achieve its goal, the US government was said to ignore rules. The end justifies the means.

Jawa Pos news reports were also oriented toward each side's efforts to achieve victory by exposing the large number of troops, ships, and other armed forces. Such reportage suggests there is only one way of conflict resolution, that is, through war, and there will be one winner only (zero-sum game). The news 'U.S. Ready to Attack Afghanistan', dated September 14, 2001, exposed the US President's statement that his country was in a state of war and would proceed to launch a military attack on Afghanistan involving thousands of soldiers.

The reportage of *Jawa Pos* continued to put forward war strategies and tactics without mentioning at all how to prevent war (peaceful solution). In its headline, 'U.S. Will Attack via Pakistan', with the subheadings 'Minister of Defense Will Deploy 50 Thousand Soldiers, Military Experts Remind U.S. that They Will Face Difficulties', September 15, 2001, for instance. The United States was described as mobilizing its army:

> The U.S. is fully developing its plan to attack Afghanistan. This is due to the refusal of the Taliban Government, which rules Afghanistan, to hand over Usamah bin Laden who is staying in the country. *Jawa Pos* journalist in Washington, Ramadhan Pohan reported, preparations for the attack are under way. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld yesterday proposed to deploy 50 thousand reserve soldiers. 'The reserves will be called out to defend their country,' said a Pentagon official as CNN quoted yesterday. About nine thousand soldiers have been called up from 31 states like New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. … The mobilization of soldiers is an additional indicator that the Pentagon is preparing military attacks.

Such an account of the field preparations that the United States carried out which prioritizes violence was also shown in its headline of September 20, 2001, 'U.S. Chooses War'. The report describes that the US Army is already prepared, and troop-carriers are starting to head for the target. It was reported that the United States would make air, sea, and ground attacks. International support to make war against terrorism is seen by *Jawa Pos* simply as an American claim, and its accusation against Osama was only an excuse to start a war against Islam.

In the report entitled, 'War Is Getting Near' with a subheading 'Afghanistan Surrounded by 100 U.S. Jet Fighters' of September 21, 2001, *Jawa Pos* 'predicted' that war would break out in a matter of a few days. With the bombastic headline, it was a *Jawa Pos* conclusion that war was nearly ready to break out. Behind the title there is a nuance of 'excitement' that the war really could break out in a short time. The news starts with: 'U.S. really chooses war. This is the way for the U.S. to force the Taliban Government to hand over Usamah bin Laden.' To support its prediction, *Jawa Pos* included statistical data on US weapons:

> *Jawa Pos* journalist in Washington Ramadhan Pohan reported last night that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is in direct control of combat aircraft. Among the super-sophisticated aircraft are F-16 Fighting Falcons, B-1 and B-52 Bombers, E-2 Hawkeye radar aircraft, and E-8C Joint Stars. … The aircraft are part of troop deployment missions after the USS Theodore Roosevelt sailed from Norfolk, Virginia. The ship leads 14 Navy ships, including an amphibious assault ship that carries about 2,000 marines.

In its previous news entitled 'U.S. Will Attack via Pakistan', September 15, 2001, *Jawa Pos* had established the view that a war would break out: The mobilization of troops is an additional indicator that the Pentagon is preparing for military attacks.

Propaganda oriented

Jawa Pos has presented two kinds of propaganda. The first was the propaganda of American revenge to defeat terrorism with all the forces at its command. The second was the propaganda that described American arrogance. *Jawa Pos* both reported and judged that the United States was arrogant in its attempts to take revenge against Afghanistan. It exposed the American pride when the United States received international support and that it would easily and certainly defeat the terrorists with its superior forces.

The revenge propaganda of the United States against terrorism was released by *Jawa Pos* for the first time when it reported the September 11 disaster. The United States was described as being furious and eager to take revenge, which led readers to a tense and 'horrifying' conclusion. The reporting was directed toward anger and resentment, not to the humanitarian aspects of the tragedy. In its headline 'New York Becomes a Dead City', September 13, 2001, for instance, *Jawa Pos* described American anger excessively. It exposed how President Bush threatened to eliminate terrorists and their related groups.

The second kind of propaganda appearing in the news about the US–Afghan war was American arrogance. *Jawa Pos* directed readers to believe that the United States was overconfident in challenging Afghanistan. As a large democratic country, the United States was described as prioritizing conceited steps to solve a problem, for example, by using its armed forces. It was described as 'arbitrating against Usamah and Afghanistan'. A tone of arrogance was also developed by asserting that US attempts at revenge were for the sake of world peace. The headline 'U.S. Will Attack via Pakistan', September 15, 2001, for example, emphasized a 'breaker' quoting the US President: 'Now, we have declared war. But, we will lead the world to victory. This nation must understand government policy.'

American arrogance was also made prominent in the headline 'U.S. Chooses War', September 20, 2001, which illustrates US combat plans, because until the deadline imposed by the United States, the Taliban government had not handed over Osama. The plans included air, sea, and ground attacks to 'eliminate' Afghanistan since the United States would not 'half-heartedly defeat' the Taliban government and its 'insistence' on protecting Osama:

> Meanwhile, it is reported from the Pentagon that Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld has given a signal of war against Afghanistan. 'This week, we will make a firm decision. Now, the troops are ready: air, sea, and ground,' he said.
>
> Ground? It seems the U.S. is not half-hearted in defeating the Taliban government that insists on not handing over Usamah bin Laden. Therefore, the U.S. deploys all its forces to get rid of Afghanistan.

War as an indication of American arrogance was emphasized by *Jawa Pos* in its headline 'War Is Getting Near', September 21, 2001. *Jawa Pos* seems to have supported the choice to use violence (war):

> The U.S. truly chooses war. That is the way the American government is forcing the Taliban government to hand over Usamah bin Laden. Now, the militant country is surrounded by 100 American jet fighters. The aircraft loaded with guided missiles are located in the Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean, Middle Asian countries, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.

Jawa Pos news reports that tend to be oriented toward the elite – an indicator of war journalism – are identified, among others, by its headline 'U.S. Ready to Attack Afghanistan', September 14, 2001, which exposed the US elite, President Bush, who accused Osama of committing the terror:

> 'He is the mastermind,' said an FBI source. 'And everyone knows he is hiding in Kabul,' he added. … Ministry of Justice officials said on Wednesday, there is some evidence indicating that Usamah was involved … U.S senator Orrin Hatch said, FBI officers have a telephone conversation indicating Usamah's involvement. A German government spokesman said on Wednesday, secret agents of Germany, France, England, and Israel also consider that Usamah is related to the attack.

President Bush himself reminds his citizens that they are facing a long and hard fight against their enemy. But he promises that the United States is not alone. Optimistically, he said, 'The world will support us … we will be patient, focusing our attention on our goal. … This war needs time. But don't get me wrong, we will win.'

The news 'U.S. Will Attack via Pakistan', September 15, 2001, also contains quotes from the US supporting elite, including potential cooperation with a number of countries to attack Afghanistan. The news was also oriented more toward victory by concentrating on reporting the US preparations and measures to attack Afghanistan, which are said to receive support from Pakistan and Russia:

> Meanwhile, 19 allied countries within NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) said they are prepared to assist the U.S. to take revenge against terrorist actions. Yesterday, Russia also gave an indication of being ready to support U.S. air attacks against Usamah's hiding place in Afghanistan. 'We are prepared to provide any assistance in the investigation,' said Russia's Minister of Defense Sergei Ivanov yesterday. 'We can speak of revenge when the actors and facts are known.'

News oriented toward victory is also seen in the headline 'Congress Agree to War', September 16, 2001. It was reported that the US Congress had agreed to war and gave full authority to Bush to attack anyone, or any country, harboring terrorists. *Jawa Pos* sees war as a form of firm decision by the United States. Use of force will apply not only to the actors of terror, but also to any country that protects them. As such, military attacks are justified:

> The U.S. made a firm decision: war. That's the result of Congress meeting yesterday. They gave full authority to President George W. Bush to use 'all forces' against those responsible for Tuesday's attack. The use of force is exercised not only against actors of terror, but also any country that protects them. This is apparent. Because the U.S. has concluded that the prime suspect is Usamah bin Laden and the country that protects him Afghanistan, the revenge attack will be directed against that country.

The following news explicitly contains a 'refreshing' fact, that is, a report on Bush's visit to the Islamic Center where he requested his people to respect Muslims. Implicitly, however, *Jawa Pos* sees President Bush's statement as insincere, and only 'seeking sympathy' from the Muslims as indicated by the subheading 'Seeking American Muslims' Sympathy, Bush Gave a Speech in Mosque':

> President Bush yesterday visited the Islamic Center in Washington. He gave a refreshing speech. Bush requested his people to respect American Muslims. 'Terrorist reputation is not identical with Islam.' Bush took off his shoes to enter the mosque. He called for an end to the anti-Islam movement due to anti-Muslim sentiments occurring after Tuesday's attack.

After the first US attack on Afghanistan, *Jawa Pos* reported intensely on the violent aspects and propaganda of the US elite and of Afghanistan in the form of claims of victory or success made by each side. The headline 'War Begins' with the subheadings 'Kabul and Kandahar Bombarded; Guided Missiles Launched from U.S. Warhips; Bush: Costs that Must be Paid', October 8, 2001, covered the American assault and its motivation in attacking Afghanistan:

> Finally the war has begun. Last night, at 20.00 Kabul time or 24.00 West Indonesian time, the U.S. bombarded Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, and Kandahar, Al-Qaidah headquarters. In the first attack, England backed the US. Explosions mixed with the hysterical cries of the citizens of the capital were heard in the black night because the electricity to the whole city had been cut. According to witnesses, an unidentified aircraft dropped at least four bombs as a Reuters correspondent Sayed Salahuddin said. … The U.S. attacks are their revenge assaults against terror actions in the U.S.

A nuance of 'surprise' and 'relief' that war had broken out is evident in the lead of the news by using the words 'at last' – the end of a long wait. The first sentence seems to say that the long awaited war has broken out at last. The construction of this sentence also wipes out the prediction of *Jawa Pos* that the United States had just been bluffing, because eventually it dared to attack Afghanistan.

In the headlines – when the war really broke out – *Jawa Pos* put forward an assumption that related the attack to a war on religion by citing British Prime

Minister Tony Blair's statement that the military attack on Afghanistan had nothing to do with religion. After the Bush speech, Blair appeared on TV. Like the US president, Blair also stated that in the first assault British forces had helped destroy the Taliban. The British prime minister underlined that the attack on the Taliban had nothing to do with religion. Blair clearly differentiated between terrorism from Muslims and terrorism from Islamic teaching. It is because terrorism, violence, and humanitarian crimes are not tolerated by Islam. 'Islam is a peace loving religion,' said Blair.

Jawa Pos frames the Afghan war in a 'win–lose' orientation. In its October 9 headline entitled 'Four US Aircraft Shot Down' with subheadings 'Usamah Safe and Sound; Taliban: U.S. Will Suffer; U.S. Receives Reproaches', *Jawa Pos* constructed the fact of war as a win–lose spectrum. The focus on the number of American aircraft shot down is confronted with the safe and sound condition of Osama – the prime target of the attack. By doing so, *Jawa Pos* seems to 'make fun' of the so-called sophisticated US military forces which failed to capture Osama and conquer the Taliban:

> The Afghan patriots were successful in shooting down four U.S. planes yesterday. 'I have confirmed that one enemy plane was successfully shot down,' said Taliban Ambassador to Pakistan, Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef in a press conference attended by the *Jawa Pos* reporterin Islamabad, Nur Budi Hariyanto. According to Zaeef, the plane was shot down in Farah province. 'At the time the sky was dark and Afghans shot it down with rockets,' he said. Three other U.S. planes reported as being shot down have not been confirmed by the government. 'We indeed did get a report that our patriots had shot down three more American planes. So far, we have not yet had any confirmation of the accuracy of this statement,' he said.

The orientation toward one party gaining victory also appeared when *Jawa Pos* exposed the Taliban's statements that the US attack on Afghanistan did not cause great losses to Afghanistan. Besides, the United States had not yet succeeded in capturing Osama, and the Afghan people were ready to fight against the US attack:

> The U.S. attacks with a single mission to catch or kill Usamah bin Laden, seem to have been unsuccessful until the second day yesterday. Because both Usamah bin Laden and the top leader of the Taliban Mullah Mohammad Umar are still healthy and alive. 'Alhamdulillah. They survive in a safe place,' said Taliban Ambassador to Pakistan Abdul Salam Zaeef yesterday.

> While in Peshawar, Pakistan, Taliban General Consulate Maulvi Najeebullah also reported that Usamah and Umar are safe.
>
> Maulvi Najeebullah said that the American and British attacks have not caused big losses.
>
> 'These brutish attacks will unite all Afghans, and the Afghans will wake up to fight against this colonial attack.'

Jawa Pos gives an impression that the war has finally started and will last a long time, by citing a statement of the U.S. Defense Secretary who was unable to ascertain when the attack on Afghanistan would end: 'This war should be seen as part of the great effort to fight terrorism. Such an effort will be lasting and widening,' said Rumsfeld. According to the him, 'the time is not clear. It is certain it will last not in weeks or months, but years.'

In all of its thirty editions, *Jawa Pos* from the beginning had expected that American revenge on Afghanistan really would occur. All its coverage is on war preparations. It keeps up the anxiety situation through its day-to-day reportage, until it feels bored because war has not broken out. When the war broke out on October 7, 2001, *Jawa Pos* seemed to be excited because its long wait had ended. Following the outbreak of the war, it established an impression that the war would last a long time. In other words, Jawa Pos tended to join in beating the war drums by directing all of its coverage toward war. It was even waiting for the war. Its news framing and reasoning had been constructed to indulge US resentment as well as confronting the anger with the Taliban's reactions.

Kompas: to muffle the war

On the contrary, *Kompas* consistently headlined the WTC attack and the US military attack on Afghanistan[30] only in the first week (September 12–18, 2001), then took a day off, and on September 20 made the events headlines again, then took another day off (September 21), and then again on September 22 and 23. For four days (September 24–27) *Kompas* did not include the destruction of the WTC in its headlines. On September 28 and 29, it again put the event in its headlines, then took a day off (September 30), and put it in again on October 1. Then for five days (October 2–7) it changed its headlines to cover other events, except on October 5. As the United States launched its attack on Afghanistan (October 7), *Kompas* included the attack in the headlines every day till October 11.

Unlike *Jawa Pos*, *Kompas* did not change the font and color of its headlines in covering the WTC destruction and the attack on Afghanistan. It put the first two days' headlines (September 12–13) across nine columns: 'Terror Haunting the United States' and 'Thousands of People Suspected Killed'. The lead of its headlines is milder, for example, in the case of American accusations of Osama as the actor in the September 13 headline 'Thousands of People Suspected Killed' with a subheading 'U.S. Declares a War against Terrorists':

> Though there is no certainty yet, evidence possessed by the government apparatus points to the extreme group of Al-Qaeda, an organization owned by the millionaire Osama bin Laden, as the prime suspect of the terrorist attack that destroyed the twin towers of the World Trade Center (WTC) New York, and destroyed part of the Pentagon Building, the headquarters of the U.S. Department of Defense, on Tuesday (9/11). However, up to now, U.S. officials themselves have avoided directly making accusations against him.

The tone of *Kompas*'s headlines did not insinuate war between the United States and Afghanistan, except in its headline of September 17, 'U.S. Ready to Fight to the Utmost'. In general, *Kompas*'s coverage is relatively milder than that of *Jawa Pos*. *Kompas*'s headlines did not take a warlike angle, but tended to focus on economic aspects, for example, as shown in 'G-7 Prepare US $ Hundreds of Billions Package To Prevent Global Recession' (September 14); 'Stock Prices in Wall Street Drop; Stocks Throughout the World Collapse' (September 18).

Kompas's coverage tended to be peace journalism oriented. Among eighteen news items, twelve (67%) are peace oriented, for instance, by exploring conflict formation (x side, y end, and z topics) to achieve a 'win–win' solution; by making the conflict transparent; by viewing the conflict/war as a problem of humanity by exposing all parties' voices; by establishing empathy and understanding; by pro-active prevention before the violence/war broke out; and by focusing on the invisible impacts, etc.

Besides, *Kompas*'s coverage tended to be oriented toward uncovering the truth (56%), by revealing the lies of the two sides from all aspects. The coverage was also oriented toward people (67%), by focusing on the suffering of all (women, children, and the elderly), and voicing the voiceless; by naming the criminal actors of the two sides; and by focusing on those who were struggling for peace at the grassroots. Also, its coverage tended to be oriented toward conflict resolution (56%), by exposing peace initiatives and preventing a follow-up war; by focusing on the structure and culture of a peaceful and anti-violence society.

Kompas sees the attack on the WTC buildings and the US military attacks on Afghanistan more as a problem of shared humanity that has to be prevented because it leads to human suffering and has the potential of triggering a world economic recession. *Kompas* views all violent acts, including the 'sweeping' of US citizens in Indonesia, as terrifying acts that must be avoided. This is because such acts harm Indonesia's national interests (e.g., foreign investors become afraid of making investments).

Kompas's headlines aim to uphold truth and reveal untruthful claims made by the Americans and the Afghan Taliban. When the attacks on the WTC occurred, *Kompas* did not directly position Osama bin Laden as the actor, but simply associated the attacks with terrorists. The pro-active attitude of *Kompas* in preventing the outbreak of war was shown by reminding the United States to be careful in attacking Afghanistan, and demonstrating the negative impacts of war. *Kompas*'s coverage was also focused on people, especially the innocent civilians

who suffered and became victims of the WTC destruction and the attack on Afghanistan.

The coverage of *Kompas* was also oriented toward conflict resolution and peaceful initiatives to prevent war. It exposed peaceful initiatives offered by many world leaders who called for and pushed the United States not to quickly choose the military way in solving the attacks on American soil on 9/11. In covering the events in Indonesia, *Kompas* tended to focus on the need that Indonesians prioritize their conscience by avoiding the 'sweeping' of American citizens.

Terror invades the United States

As *Jawa Pos* covered the destruction of the WTC by using an analogy of the movies *Independence Day*, *King Kong*, *Godzilla*, and the *Towering Inferno*, *Kompas* also used an analogy of the *Towering Inferno* that became true. The headline of September 12 'Terror Haunting the United States', and the subheading 'Five Planes Crashed, the WTC Buildings Smashed', expose the chronological picture of the ruins of the WTC, statements of other heads of states/governments that condemn the attack, and the efforts of the firemen in dealing with the situation in the field, without naming certain parties as the attackers:

> Towering Inferno. This is not just a movie, but it is real. At about 09.00 local time (8 p.m. Western Indonesia Time), Tuesday (9/11), when everything was still deserted and the life of the city just began, suddenly a plane hit a tower of the World Trade Center (WTC) New York, leaving a big hole between the 80th and 85th floors of the 110-floor building. The shock did not end, because 18 minutes afterwards, a second plane hit the other tower. And, in only one - two hours, the U.S. financial center was ruined.
>
> Some minutes later, a jumbo plane also hit the U.S. Department of Defense building, the Pentagon, close to Washington, and set fire to the symbol of the U.S. military superpower.

The pro-active attitude of *Kompas* in preventing the violence/war from occurring is shown in the headline of September 16, 'Putin Asks the U.S. Not to Be Reckless'. This headline describes the US effort to fight terrorism and get support from many countries, but *Kompas* revealed the requests of Russia and Saudi Arabia that the United States not act rashly and hurriedly without clear supporting facts. By citing the statement of Russian President Vladimir Putin as the headline, *Kompas* indirectly says that the US determination to wage war against terrorism is worth being supported, but that the United States should not use violence as a solution to conquer terrorists, like a bandit who acts behind the scene:

> The U.S. determination to eliminate terrorism has support from many countries, including Russia and Saudi Arabia. However, the two countries and

> some others have reminded the U.S. not to act rashly and hurriedly without clear supporting facts.
>
> 'Do not act like a bandit behind the scene. We should proceed through obvious facts,' said Russian President Vladimir Putin at a press conference with Armenian President, Robert Kocharian, Saturday (9/15) in Yerevan.

The *Kompas* headlines did not tend to point to the identity of the WTC attackers. They only describe all views of the actors in the violence/war. *Kompas* did not name those suspected as the WTC attackers – the United States claimed that the attacker was Osama. In the headline of September 18 entitled 'Stock Prices in Wall Street Drop' and the subheading 'Stocks Throughout the World Collapse', *Kompas* tended to expose the impact of the drop of stock prices in Wall Street, New York, as due to the terrorist acts. *Kompas* only mentioned 'terrorist acts', without identifying them:

> As predicted earlier, the prices of stocks in Wall Street, New York, the United States of America, dropped immediately, when trading reopened on Monday (9/17) morning. Up to 11.43 a.m. local time, the Dow Jones index for industrial stocks decreased by six percent. The drops were triggered by heavy selling of stocks by investors, especially the industrial stocks that mostly suffered from the terrorist acts last Tuesday that ruined the twin towers of the World Trade Center (WTC), which is only three blocks from the transaction center.

Kompas considered that the reactions of groups of society in Indonesia toward the US attack on Afghanistan by using 'sweeping' were worrying and created serious anxiety for US citizens in Jakarta, and should be dealt with seriously by the police. The *Kompas* headline of September 28 titled 'U.S. Ambassador Disappointed with RI Police' with the subheading 'On Dealing with Anti-U.S. Actions' were used to reduce violent acts so that they would not disturb US citizens in Indonesia by exposing the disappointment of the US Ambassador in Jakarta towards the police:

> The situation in Indonesia recently has brought about serious anxiety to foreign citizens in Indonesia, especially U.S. citizens. The U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia, Robert S. Gelbard, Thursday (9/27), said that he was disappointed with the Indonesian police who give an impression of non-seriousness or unwillingness to take measures against the anti-America demonstrators' actions and ''sweeping'' that made American citizens in Indonesia panicky. 'They seemed to be unready to act—such as—reminding or even arresting the demonstrators that have been obviously breaking laws such as doing some 'sweeping' or doing other things that have threatened American citizens, or other acts that are also law violations,' said Gelbard to

> the press after meeting with Coordinating Minister of Political and Security Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono at his office, Thursday afternoon.

Kompas considered that 'sweeping' was a radical, extreme, and intolerant act that should be avoided by religious followers, and should be replaced by an attitude that puts forward conscience. Peaceful discourse that puts forward humanistic aspects was developed by *Kompas* in its headline of September 29 entitled 'Societies Requested to Foreground Conscience', with a subheading 'Government Takes Its Stand on Latest Development'. In this headline, *Kompas* exposed the appeal of the Indonesian government to all religious followers to respond the newest situation in Afghanistan:

> The government appeals to all religious followers to foreground conscience to prevent themselves from radical, extreme, intolerant, and exclusive acts in religious life. The government is sure that leaders of religions and religious institutions could play a major and significant role in guiding their followers to help bring mutual understanding and cooperation and create reconciliation and harmony, and keep a conducive situation to develop the nation and state.

Besides 'sweeping', the *jihad* appeal to use weapons is viewed by *Kompas* as an inappropriate action. By saying so, *Kompas* exposes the statement made by the Minister of Religious Affairs, Said Agil, hoping that the *jihad* issue developing in society would not be meant as making use of weapons and mass mobilization to get US citizens out of Indonesian territory:

> '*Jihad* should be meant that the followers of Islam are not oppressed. It means that the US does not boldly attack, understanding justice and truth, *amar makruf nahi mungkar*, and avoiding physical clashes,' said Minister of Religious Affairs Said Agil.

When the United States attacked Afghanistan, *Kompas* focused on the humantarian aspects by publishing Indonesian government formal statements about the attack. In its headline of October 9 'The U.N. Must Take Collective Measures', *Kompas* revealed that Indonesia had asked the UN Security Council to take measures to restore the situation and deal with humanitarian aspects:

> The Indonesian Government asks the U.N., especially the Security Council, in line with their authority and responsibility for keeping the peace and international security, to take collective action to recover the situation and deal with humanitarian aspects that are caused by the Afghan conflict.

But *Kompas* also became trapped in warlike journalism when it covered the US military attack on Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. Even though its headline of October 8 was neutral, 'U.S. and Britain Attack Afghanistan', the first sentence

of the report used the words 'at last' – as did *Jawa Pos* – giving a nuance of 'surprise' and 'relief' as if *Kompas* had been waiting for the outbreak of war:

> The U.S. and U.K.'s massive attacks on Afghanistan at last started on Sunday (10/7) night at 8.57 p.m. Kabul time (11.37 p.m. Western Indonesia Time) with five big blasts that jolted Kabul, the Afghan capital.

Truth orientation was exposed by *Kompas* when it clarified the identity of the actors behind the WTC attack. In its headline of September 12 'Terror Haunting the United States', for instance, *Kompas* presented the fact that the FBI was not yet certain about who were the terrorists at the WTC towers on 9/11:

> The FBI believes the planes that hit the WTC were hijacked. The FBI is studying a report saying both planes were hijacked. An officer stressed the report is still being examined, and officially the FBI does not yet know for certain the causes of the incident. 'It seems that it is not an incident,' said a second officer who also refused publication of his name. 'The planes were so low, they seemed to fly too low and put at an angle to hit, according to the Vice President of CNN,' said a senior member of the FBI.

Reportage that puts an emphasis on people's actions to deal with violence is shown in the headline of September 14, 'G-7 Prepare U.S. $ Hundreds of Billions Package', with a subheading 'To Prevent Global Recession'. It exposed the efforts of people who were digging in the ruins still giving off smoke in the Pentagon building:

> Meanwhile, yesterday, Wednesday, the Pentagon resumed normal activity although firemen were still working hard to extinguish the fire that for the whole night had burnt the roof of the highest floor. People came back to the Pentagon marching in their hundreds. They dug up the ruins that were still giving off smoke. Rescue teams tried to find possible survivors under the ruins.

Kompas also reported that the US attack on Afghanistan would only make civilians become victims. In its headline of October 10, 'Guided Missiles Hit a UN NGO Office', *Kompas* described the anger of humanitarian officers because US bombs had fallen on civilian areas:

> UN Spokesperson Stephanie Bunker, in a press conference, cited the U.N. Coordinator for Afghanistan, Mike Sackett, who said, 'People should differentiate those fighting from those innocent and unarmed civilians.' An ATC officer Dr Shah Wali angrily told Reuters, 'You see how destructive the

> bombings are. This is a civilian area and they have killed four people in this building.'

Kompas also tended to expose the economic reconstruction by focusing on the economic impact of the WTC attack on the global stock market and economic stability. In its headline of September 14, 'G-7 Prepare US $ Hundreds of Billions Package', *Kompas* revealed that the developed countries in G-7 would take any measures to prevent the US and global economy from entering a full-scale recession:

> To prevent the U.S. and global economy from shrinking into a full scale recession – following the attack that destroyed the twin towers of the World Trade Center (WTC) in New York as the center of global financial activities – the developed countries of the G-7 will take any necessary steps to restore the global economy and stock market. Included in these steps are a pouring of short term liquidity worth US $ hundreds of billions and the possibility of decreasing interest rates simultaneously by central banks, to avoid the collapse of the global financial system and the possibility of a credit squeeze in the economy or market.

Repeatedly, *Kompas* underlined that the US attack may only be taken as a final step under certain conditions. Peaceful solution-oriented ideas are cited from Kusnanto Anggoro who made some suggestions to President Megawati that she should take a position on the attack on Afghanistan. In the headline of October 11, 'National Interest More Principal', *Kompas* exposed solutions of the attack, which are: the US attack should be calculable and limited; there should be an international mandate through a UN resolution; Indonesia to take an initiative toward the United States through the Islamic Conference Organization (ICO); and a need for international efforts to help humanitarian programs for refugees in the form of medicine and food. The solutions are suggested as a reply to an appeal that Indonesia should break off diplomatic relations with the United States:

> What is most important now, said Kusnanto, is firstly that if the attack is not avoided, the attack should be calculable and limited. Secondly, it should be carried out on the basis of an international mandate through a UN resolution. Thirdly, Indonesia is expected to take initiatives to meet with member countries of the Islamic Conference Organization (IOC). The meeting is to take an IOC position that will not be too far from the position taken by other Islamic countries that will be very ambivalent toward what has happened in Afghanistan and the US attack on Afghanistan. Fourth is an international global effort to help with humanitarian programs, refugees, medicine, and food. 'If Megawati can impose these four things, that is what Indonesia can do optimally. Because a diplomatic freeze is obviously not

> reasonable, because such a step will not change the situation. Instead, Indonesia will be isolated by Western countries,' he said.

The imperative sentence of the October 5 headline entitled 'Government Bans "Sweeping"', with a subheading 'Cabinet Meeting Five and Half Hours', indicate that *Kompas* supported the decision taken by the government through a Cabinet meeting banning 'sweeping' and *jihad* (physical involvement of Indonesian citizens in conflict and war in any other country):

> The five-hour cabinet meeting (10.30 a.m. to 04.00 p.m.) in the Main Building of State Secretariat, Jakarta, was attended by Vice President Hamzah Haz. The meeting also decided not to approve of, or tolerate, the physical involvement of Indonesian citizens in conflict or war in any other country, in the context of international efforts to fight terrorism after the September 11, 2001 tragedy in New York and Washington D.C., America. Coordinating Minister of Politics and Security Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said, 'the Indonesian government takes a position and views that the physical involvement of Indonesian citizens in the context of international efforts to fight terrorism after the 11 September 11, 2001 tragedy is not approved.'

In summary, *Kompas* had chosen to interpret the WTC tragedy and the US attack on Afghanistan not in the context of war journalism. The headlines of *Kompas* tended to foreground how the parties at war should seek a peaceful solution. In addition, *Kompas* paid serious attention to the intangible effects of war. Thus, *Kompas* preferred to develop peace-oriented reportage.

Notes

1 This research was done by a team of the Media Watch & Civic Education Program, Lembaga Studi Perubahan Sosial (LSPS/Institute for Social Change Studies), Surabaya, Indonesia, sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Jakarta, Indonesia. The team consists of Tjahjo Purnomo W., Teguh Imawan, Esti Megawati, Erna Widi Septiharyanti, and Hismi Hasta Yuniasih.

2 The WTC is often considered as a symbol of the US economy, since it is a place where the world's biggest stock market exists. The stock market contributes to the US economy. In three months, non-US investors spend more than US$100 billion buying stocks of US companies. Such amounts of funding strengthen the value of the US dollar. The destruction of the WTC had an adverse impact on the US economy. The Dow Jones Index has dropped sharply to its lowest point since Black Friday of October 1987. The Nasdaq index – a stock market for medium and small enterprises – also dropped to its lowest point since October 1998. See 'Masa Depan Koboi yang Boyak', *Tempo*, September 23, 2001, p. 142, and 'Keterpurukan Bursa Setelah WTC Porak-Poranda' *Tempo*, September 30, 2001, pp. 124–125.

3 'Seusai Selasa Hitam', *Tempo*,September 23, 2001, pp. 134–135.

4 Osama bin Laden is the seventh of fifty children of the most successful construction entrepreneur in Saudi Arabia. This 51-year-old bearded man, who was hiding in Afghanistan, is estimated to be worth US$300 million. Osama came to Afghanistan

when the Taliban regime became more dominant in 1995. At the time, the Taliban had encircled Kabul. He was made welcome by Mullah Mohammad Omar, the Taliban spiritual leader. Osama contributed US$3 million to the Taliban to support the capture of Jallalabad and Kabul. See: 'Osama bin Laden dan kelompoknya', *Forum*,September 23, 2001, p. 19, and 'Seorang Paria yang Tak Terjamah', *Tempo*, September 30, 2001, pp. 146–148.

The name of this man has been spelt differently by Indonesian print media. *Kompas, Surya*, *Forum*, and *Gatra*use the spelling Osama bin Laden. *Tempo* uses Osama bin Ladin. *Jawa Pos* uses Usamah bin Laden.

5 'Sebelum Perang Dimulai …', *Tempo*, September 30, 2001, pp. 136–150.

6 'Seruan Jihad Setengah Nada', *Tempo*, October 7, 2001, pp. 20–22. *Jihad* means someone's willingness to sacrifice their belongings and life to uphold Islamic teachings. In the case of Afghanistan, the concept of *jihad* refers to the willingness of a Muslim to sacrifice life by going to the war arena in Afghanistan. 'Seruan Jihad Setengah Nada', *Tempo*, October 7, 2001, pp. 20–22.

7 Some Islamic organizations that often stage demonstrations are KAMMI (Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia/Indonesian Moslem Student Action Union), FPI (Front Pembela Islam/Islamic Defender Front), GAZA (Gerakan Anti Zionis/Anti Zionist Movement), GPI (Islamic Youth Movement), HAMMAS (Inter Campus Moslem Student Association), Liga Muslim Indonesia/Indonesian Moslem League, Laskar Jundullah/Jundullah Fighter, Majelis Mujahidin/Mujahidin Council, Forum Peduli Islam/Islamic Concern Forum, Laskar Jihad/Jihad Fighter, and Syabab Hidayatullah. See: 'Siaga Satu di Merdeka Selatan' and 'Yang Menanti Berkah Osama', *Tempo*, September 30, 2001, pp. 24, 25; 'Dan Bendera Amerika pun Dibakar', *Tempo*, October 7, 2001, p. 25, 'Gelombang Aksi Bermuara ke Megawati', *Tempo*, October 21, 2001, pp. 28–29, and 'Amerika Menyerang, Jihad Menghadang', *Gatra*, October 6, 2001, p. 26.

8 'Rudal dan Roti di Ambang Salju', *Tempo*, October 21, 2001, p. 148.

9 'Seruan Keluar Jalur', *Tempo*, October 21, 2001, p. 30.

10 'Diplomasi Gaya Megawati', *Tempo*, October 28, 2001, pp. 28–29.

11 Dedy N. Hidayat, 'Media, Sang Penabuh Genderang Perang', *Kompas*, September 30, 2001, p. 29.

12 Johan Galtung was born on October 24, 1930, in Oslo, Norway. He obtained his Ph.D. in Mathematics (1956) and Sociology (1957) from the University of Oslo. He also has *honoris causa* doctorates in social sciences and peace research from several universities. He is currently a professor of peace studies in several universities such as Granada, Ritsumeikan, Tromso, Witten/Herdeckeuniversities. He is also the Director of TRANSCEND: A Peace Development Network, Taplow Court.

13 Ray Cunnington, 'How Journalists Can Help Peace', The Canadian Center of Teaching Peace (www.peace.ca).

14 Ibid.

15 Johan Galtung, 'The Peace Journalism Option', Buckinghamshire, UK, 1997 (www.transcend.org).

16 This is different from Philip Knightley's opinion in *The First Casualty*in which he says 'From the Crimean War of 1845–56 to the Gulf War of 1990–1, the first victim was truth. This was because both sides engaging in the wars claimed themselves as the righteous. Both sides campaigned for propaganda so that their opinion was accepted by the public' (Eriyanto and Coen Husain Pontoh, ' "Amerika" versus "Islam" ', in *Pantau*, November, 2001, p. 38.

17 Cunnington, loc. cit.

18 Johan Galtung, 'After Violence: 3Rs, Reconstruction, Reconciliation, Resolution', Geneva, 1998 (www.transcend.org).

19 I. Marsana Windhu, *Kekuasaan & Kekerasan Menurut Johan Galtung*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1992, pp. 65–68.

20 Ibid.
21 Galtung, 1997, loc. cit.
22 Ibid.
23 Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick, 'Peace Journalism – How To Do It', Sydney, 2000 (annabelmcg@aol.com).
24 Cunnington, loc .cit.
25 Jake Lynch, 'Using Conflict Analysis in Reporting', www.conflictandpeace.org.
26 Galtung, 1997, loc. cit.
27 A serif character is one with a short line at the top and bottom of the letter. A sans serif character is one with no lines.
28 Yasraf Amir Piliang, *Sebuah Dunia yang Menakutkan; Mesin-mesin Kekerasan dalam Jagat Raya Chaos*. Bandung: Mizan, 2001, p. 205.
29 Methodologically, only research whose sample is taken randomly – every member of the population has the same opportunity to represent the population – can generalize its findings.
30 *Kompas* uses the spelling Afganistan, while *Jawa Pos* uses Afghanistan.

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10 War, words, and images

Goenawan Mohamad

I

> War is like German opera, too long and too loud.
>
> Evelyn Waugh on war, early 1940s

In the old days war might be a mind-numbing episode and an unpleasant noise. Today it has skillfully managed intervals and a perfect decibel level. I am referring to the 2003 US-led war on Iraq where the media have made history a spectacle. Twenty-four-hour non-stop television coverage has to be made *not* boring.

Every now and then, after the bombs had exploded, fires had flared, and hundreds of Republican Guards were killed, together with a score of instances of 'collateral damage', one had an intermezzo with a neatly dressed 'expert' facing a map, explaining how the war was going and what tactics were being employed. He was as calm as a commentator on a Jakarta television channel, analyzing a spirited soccer match between Germany's Bayern Munich and Spain's Valencia in an Italian sports stadium, making aggression and fighting things of the past, and therefore tidy. The war was treated like a spectator sport.

Television, 'medium cool' as they say, produces the kind of journalism that isolates us further from the drone and dirt of history, even when it is about a war. No screams are heard. There is no smell of skin scorched by fire. Broadcasters of all kinds do not want to show the bloody, the festering, the terrifying, and the disgusting. Even though television is now capable of narrating war at the very moment when the real killing is going on, that simultaneity is precisely what misleads us. It is not accompanied by concurrence of space. The camera portrays a battle near Basra while you follow it in Kyoto, drinking beer.

We have given technology the mandate to affirm that what we see is no fantasy. TV journalism makes 'reality' even more forceful: the images move and they have sound. But things become transient, fleeting, and forgotten. The blood of the defeated and the death of children killed by bombs gone astray will quickly vanish from the reality list. Once war is just a performance, once cruelty immediately becomes the past, and memory is made short by the speed of infor-

mation, the battle is less horrific than entertaining – especially the 2003 war on Iraq, which transpired, in the words of a Pentagon strategist, like a 'cakewalk'. After all, it was a war against a country with a very limited capability to battle the mighty US forces.

Hence in a way it is a strange, absurd, war. From the beginning, many people living in Indonesia – with no emotional attachment either to Iraq or to Saddam Hussein – had always been puzzled by the fact that the United States, a superpower with an unrivaled military budget, an economy that is the richest in the world, and with the most innovative weapons industry, felt threatened by a country already exhausted by its defeat in the first Gulf War. Saddam's republic was one so cornered that it could not refuse the UN groups' carrying out inspections; it was, and still is, an economy with no strong industrial basis, a nation ten times smaller than the United States; it is was a regime hated by most Iraqis; it was a force that perhaps did have terrifying weapons, but yet was also a power that according to the Pentagon planners could be quickly defeated. How could Saddam be a threat?

It soon became clear that, as one British journalist put it, it was the first war in history that ended before its cause could be found (Massing 2003) – probably because it was a war meant not to fight an enemy, but to invent an enemy.

In a speech to the Council on Foreign Relations in February 2002, US Vice-President Cheney admitted that there was a difficult question, as to who was America's enemy, after the communist superpower collapsed. 'When America's great enemy suddenly disappeared,' he said, 'many wondered what new direction our foreign policy would take … there was no single, immediate, global threat that any roomful of experts could agree upon.' He added that after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, all of that changed: 'The threat is known and our role is clear now.'

It seems that some people are capable of transforming a terrible tragedy into a happy yell of 'eureka!' This also means that '9/11', as the attack is generally referred to, immediately provides a sense to the language of belligerence the United States has decided to adopt in its new global posture.

In the beginning, however, the language was not entirely determined by American design.

II

> It is confusing when they kill the innocent. But this is precisely the language of being noticed.
>
> Don DeLillo in *Mao II*

I was in New York on September 11, 2001. I was still in New York in the wake of 'The Attack', some five days after it had destroyed the Twin Towers and killed almost 3000 innocent people. I saw how the city suffered the terror and the grief. Street corners and parks became new rostra for shock and sorrow, expressed in

writings, dirges, candles, flowers, and prayers. In Washington Square, in front of the Memorial Arch, a marble portal 100 years old that had become the gate to this park, there was a hastily built wire screen. Attached to it was, among others, a note scribbled on a small piece of paper, placed just above several burnt-out candles and withered flowers of mourning. The note was a quote attributed to Nelson Mandela: 'It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us most.'

Light, or clarity, implies a presumption of perfect interpretation of things. In the case of terrorism as language, it may have a dangerous end. When to communicate a message, or to make a statement, is to kill unarmed and unprepared people in a spectacular way, the outcome cannot be a cognitive symmetry equal to 'understanding'. As in any primordial expression, something is there beyond the reach of the one who sends the message and of the one who receives it. Even if it is done in a well-planned manner, like when a group of trained hijackers directed two Boeing 767s to hit the Twin Towers on that fateful day, terror, as a 'language', like any other form of language, as Paul de Mann puts it, has 'the distinctive privilege' to be able 'to hide meaning behind a misleading sign', and like any form of language, it also has 'the distinctive curse' that 'it is forced to act this way' (1983: 11).

There are two major signs in the language of September 11. One is 'the Twin Towers', and the other is 'The Attack'.

The Twin Towers

On February 27, 1993, a truckload of explosives was ignited in the parking garage of the World Trade Center, and the blast ripped a 180-foot (55-meter) hole in the wall of the underground Port Authority Trans-Hudson train station. Six people were killed. Compared to what happened eight years later, the 1993 bombing was a minor shock. Yet one can see it as a premonitory signal of the next, more disastrous attack on September 11, 2001. Had the hijacked planes failed to destroy the Twin Towers, another attempt would almost certainly have followed. The buildings seemed to be the logical target of terrorists who associated them with a condemnable, arrogant, and mischievous power.

It chanced that both the 1993 bombing and the 2001 assault were the acts of people who used Islam as their legitimizing ideology. Mark Juergensmeyer, in his *Terror In the Mind of the Gods*, classifies the violence as an act of 'religious terrorism'; it is 'symbolic'. The point of the attack was 'to produce a graphic and easily understandable object lesson'. The acts were not '*tactics* directed towards an immediate, earthly, or strategic goal, but *dramatic events* intended to impress for their symbolic significance' (2000: 12).

Symbols, however, are slippery signs of language. As a part of human vocabulary, 'tower' denotes pride, grandeur, ambition, and high-level achievement. Even as a verb, in English, the word acts as a metaphor for superiority. Cities and countries compete to build the tallest building on earth. Yet on September 11, 2001, the Twin Towers could also have meant something else, something outside the notion of supremacy, ambition, and/or achievement.

Only three days after 'The Attack', a noted Indonesian political analyst, Dewi Fortuna Anwar, in her interview with the *Jakarta Post* (2001, September 14), described the World Trade Center as not only 'the symbol of the American financial market and the Mecca of international finance', but also 'the symbol of Jewish financial influence in the U.S.'.

It is not certain whether Dewi Fortuna Anwar's description suggests her own view or the way people in many parts of the world perceived the power behind the Towers. Maybe both. When one uses the word 'symbol', one assumes a consentaneity of meaning. In other words, a symbol is never privately signified. Still, the signifying is, in actual practice, an indeterminate act of interpreting.

Right after Anwar's interview, the US Ambassador to Indonesia wrote a letter to the editors of the *Jakarta Post* (2001, September 15).It was a strongly worded statement. He called Anwar's view 'anti-Semitic and misinformed'. 'Her comments suggest that the terrible acts against Americans and even acts of terrorism within Indonesia may be justified.'

The Ambassador's response was not about the Twin Towers as a symbol of power, but, in the wake of September 11, as a symbol of victim. While both power and victim tend to draw everything else into their own orbit of support, each has its own demand for recognition. The symbol's ambivalence is unpronounced both in Anwar's remark and Gelbard's response. However, in a wider public imagination, there is, on one hand, 'power', viewed with a measure of mistrust; and on the other, 'victim', viewed with a trace of sympathy. In a poll conducted internationally by Gallup, *USA Today*,and CNN, more people in Iran and Pakistan believe that the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks were not justified, although only a fraction of Iranian and Pakistani respondents, no more than 2 per cent, think that the United States, as a world power, is 'trustworthy' and 'friendly'.

Hence we find different readings of the symbolic nature of 'The Attack'. To non-Americans, New York represents what is appealing, and yet intimidating, about the United States. The city, or 'America', signifies a modernity that is liberating and yet stifling, a progress that at the end is a mighty Weberian 'iron cage'. It is an unsettling contrast. In a long verse, Rendra, an Indonesian poet, who lived in the city in the 1960s, wrote (1971):

> New York spreads its legs.
> Hard and arrogant.
> Cement and steel.
> Cold and rigid.
> In the middle of the bright lights
> Comes the sound of restless music
> Which of course
> Means nothing.

More striking are the gloomy words of Adunis, or Adonis, the penname of Ali Ahmad Said, a Syrian poet:

New York is 'a statue of a woman,
In one hand raising tatters named liberty
By sheets of paper which we name history,
And in another hand strangulating a child
Named the Earth.'

In Adonis's poem, New York speaks for American hypocrisy. Yet most Americans would agree with Djuna Barnes that New York is one place where Americans truly 'don't find what is specifically American'. It is unlikely that in 2001, most Americans, not to mention New Yorkers, would see in the Twin Towers – no longer the tallest buildings on earth – a site of arrogance, of pride, and of glory. Today they call it 'Ground Zero', a technical term that has become a metaphor suggesting a site of profound grief, loss, and horror. But before September 11, 2001, the towers did not always enjoy easy commendation.

Architect Yamasaki did provide something less stiffly rectilinear in the area: the base of the towers was created as a plaza of 5 acres square, with arcades, fountains, works of art by Fritz Koenig, James Rosati, Mayazuki Nagure, and – after the 1993 bombing – a granite circle by Ellen Zimmerman. But all this, according to *Fodor's Guide*, 'unsuccessfully intended to humanize the scale of the complex'. The guidebook on New York describes the World Trade Center's towers – each was almost half a kilometer tall, marking, or rather disturbing, the New York skyline – as examples of 'architecture-gone-out-of-control'. Another guidebook published by the American Institute of Architecture is more disparaging: the World Trade Center was built by the New York Harbor Authority in the spirit of people who 'ran amok with both money and aesthetics'.

The Attack

The other sign in the 'language' of the terror is 'The Attack'.

For many people living outside the United States, especially in places where destruction and killing take place on an almost regular basis, what happened on September 11, 2001, was not totally something out of the ordinary, or unprecedented, despite the magnitude of the horror. For most Indonesians, the terrorist assaults in the United States were not as portentous as stories of atrocities committed by warring factions in Aceh in the northwest and in Ambon in the east.

Sadly, in tragedy, as in solidarity, there is always a sense of 'territory' – national, ethnic, or religious. Americans like to complain that people in other, particularly Muslim, countries showed almost no sympathy to the victims killed at 'Ground Zero'. They are right, at least partly. But they had their share in territorializing the tragedy.

But 'imagology', as Milan Kundera (1999) puts it, referring to the triumph of the media-generated images over both ideology and reality, is unbeatable. Not

long after all TV channels broadcast the images of two planes crashing into the Twin Towers and setting fire to the two colossal buildings, a US Congressman was quoted as saying that the attack on September 11 was 'the second Pearl Harbor'. Six months later, in commemorating 'The Attack', CNN interviewed Ed Koch. The former Mayor of New York City repeated the Pearl Harbor comparison with greater vehemence.

In other words, it is a misreading of the 'language' of September 11. The difference between 'The Attack' and Pearl Harbor is not merely technical. In the attack on December 7, 1941, Japan's sudden air strikes killed US servicemen at a US naval base in Hawaii; a great war was then imminent, and each side was duly armed. In contrast, in the September 11 horror, the victims were civilians; all were totally unprepared to deal with any kind of violence. In short, what the terrorists did was large-scale murder. The New York Police Department was more accurate when it called 'Ground Zero' the 'site of crime', not a battlefield.

Yet the image of Pearl Harbor (on 'a date which shall live in infamy') persists. Americans like to insist that the September 11 attack was the first assault on American soil since World War II. Nothing is farther from the truth. Needless to say that they are talking mainly of 'air strikes'. Of course, on September 11 one saw hostile airplanes coming from the sky, striking at the heart of an American city. But to call it the 'first assault on American soil since the World War II' is to ignore two important facts. The first is that the American Airlines and United Airlines planes used to destroy the Twin Towers were instruments of contemporary terrorism. Their violence is not a territorial issue. What is so outrageous about it is not that it invaded 'American soil,' but because it killed a large number of innocent people. And the victims were not just Americans – although the American media, particularly television, failed to portray how Pakistani and Bangladeshi families, who had hundreds of their kin killed in the Attack, suffered. The second fact follows the first. As an act of terrorism, what happened to the Twin Towers is not the first one of its kind. Previous attacks (they were not 'air strikes', but attacks all the same) did take place on American soil. I have mentioned the 1993 bombing. A larger destruction of property on American soil occurred in 1995 when Timothy McVeigh, who had links with the Christian Identity movement, bombed the Oklahoma City Federal Building, killing 146 people, including children. Although the persons guilty of these different acts of terrorism came from different nationalities and backgrounds, they shared a common enemy, i.e., the United States as it is today.

The persistence of the Pearl Harbor-like image disturbs the clarity of American purpose and principles. It confuses the way the United States conceptualizes its response to the attack. It is no longer certain whether the current military campaign is (a) President George W. Bush's 'war' against evil; or (b) a war like other American wars in the past; or (c) a police action to catch the criminals and bring them to justice.

If it is (a), then it is a war with no definite term of accomplishment; given the persistence of evil in our earthly life, the 'war' will be an endless act of violence – something unsustainable by any human institution. If it is (b), meaning a war like

previous American wars, it is still not clear whether the enemy is a state-like body with a definite center of authority on whom the United States can force terms of defeat and surrender, or something else; al-Qaeda is, after all, an NGO. If it is (c), a police action, then the United States has disregarded the imperative of due process; certainly it failed to apply the principle of presumption of innocence.

But the Pearl Harbor image persists. Mr. Bush and the American public seem to want to reclaim the right to wage a 'just war', a collective notion of a vigorous act of self-defense, and a self-image of power and forcefulness. The Vietnam War had tarnished this self-image; and on September 11, 2001, a small group of terrorists, who acted like kamikaze pilots, but with a greater success and a larger dose of brutality, damaged it even further. The choice to cling to the memory of Pearl Harbor betrays a psyche so insecure that the response it gives to a major terrorist attack is curiously also a series of patriotic outbursts, full of sound and fury.

Perhaps things would work differently if the United States read the symbolic nature of 'The Attack' without the shadow of Pearl Harbor, which was an act of belligerence to force the United States to surrender to the attacker's camp. As a 'language to be noticed', the September 11 terrorist acts were part of a different 'war', maybe not a war in the literal sense of the word, but most probably in the line of a 'holy war'. Asked if he was declaring war on the West, Osama bin Laden replied, 'It is not a declaration of war – it's a real description of the situation.' The situation is marked by a 'war' that 'will not only be between the two people of the sacred mosques and the Americans, but it will be between the Islamic world and the Americans and their allies'. Because, he explains, 'this war is a new crusade led by America against the Islamic nations' (cited in Bodansky 1999: 190, 199).

Here, the clarity of meaning ('war' as a state of armed conflict between belligerents) betrays the darkness of the metaphor ('war' as a concerted effort or campaign to combat something injurious or intolerable, but waged by an unspecified agent – 'the Islamic world' – against an unspecified antagonist – 'the Americans and their allies'). Surprisingly, the American response, like the terrorist act, is to adopt a language to which fundamentalists relate in their discourse. It is predominantly ruled by what linguists might call 'the notion of transparency', that is, there is very little play between the literal word and the thing to which the word refers. There is not much room for figures of speech, irony, or dissent (cf. Williams 2002). The word 'war' in 'holy war' and in 'war against terrorism' is seized from being a metaphor and transformed into a concept conventionally used, leading to an actual military campaign to destroy an enemy.

On that account, Mr. Bush's use of the word 'war' is also an attempt to obliterate, or repress, its own 'misleading sign'. It necessarily fails. The problem the United States has in naming the al-Qaeda fighters jailed in the Guantanamo detention camp 'prisoners of war' is a problem in the American 'notion of transparency'. The alarm noticeable in Mr. Bush's State of the Union speech of February 2002, referring to the existence of the 'Axis of Evil', retains the temper

of a struggle for 'infinite justice', words previously used as the codename of the military campaign against the 'Evil One'. Yet it uses the vocabulary of war between nations, hinting at a possible US attack on Iraq, with an inevitable, and noticeable, fervor of a patriotic armed struggle.

III

> I've seen a lot of patriots … and their patriotism was only good for legends; it was bad for their prose.
>
> Ernest Hemingway (Baker 1981)

One year after 'The Attack', I cannot help feeling apprehensive when I go to American bookstores and come across books flaunting self-congratulatory titles like *What's So Great About America*, with the author arguing that 'Americans do not need to apologize for the fact that their country acts abroad in a way that is good for them' (D'Souza 2002).

I come from Indonesia, a country where patriotism can be as expressive as anywhere else, where even anti-government protesters will solemnly sing nationalist songs before they march against the police line. I know there is something beautiful and powerful in being part of a larger, meaningful, community. But there is always a dark side behind every patriotic posture, particularly in a period of hostility. It is not exactly hate. It is an impulse for exclusion.

The current US Administration was not aware of the need to recognize a shared vulnerability among nations vis-à-vis a global menace. While asking the rest of the world to help the war against the al-Qaeda network, the United States continues to view the global effort as, to use CNN's banner, 'America's New War' – hence, the Americanization of September 11. The other day I went to New York City's Rockefeller Plaza. Before 'The Attack', it used to have flags of different nations adorning the small square in the center. After September 11, the Plaza authority pulled down all other flags, and in their places is hoisted only the Stars and Stripes, the ubiquitous signifier of American nationalism, as pronounced in words like the 'Patriotic Act' and the 'Office of Homeland Security'. The language used is indicative that, from the hills of Montezuma to the shore of Tripoli the world is no longer a varied geography of positions, but a Manichean structure constructed by 'us', meaning 'America' – which is an inverted image of the binary world in al-Qaeda brochures. The American propensity is to view the problem of national security, in their current 'War on Terror', as something separate from the effort to increase the institutional capacity and practical efficacy of the international legal order.

The result is a hastily built Fortress America, projecting a policy of 'exception' that Carl Schmitt, the Nazi philosopher, would appreciate. In such a policy, the state, which is governed by the ever-present possibility of conflict and annihilation, requires a sovereign who, in the face of existential uncertainties, incarnates an authority that is superior to that of the law itself. The clamor of Bush's 'war

on terrorism' sounds like a distant echo of the opening of Schmitt's argument: 'The sovereign is he who decides on the exception' (1988). No doubt, it is a disturbingly 'realistic' view of politics, which, in the manner of Thomas Hobbes, subordinates *de jure* authority to *de facto* power: *autoritas, non veritas facit legem*. The law is made by the one who has authority (i.e., power) and not the one who possesses the truth (the legitimate sovereign) (see Balibar 1992).

It is with such a Hobbesian agenda in mind, and *not* '9/11', that the Bush Cabinet designs a planet in which American supremacy prevails. It is a terrifying ambition; I would have thought it a part of a science fiction script if I had not read about it myself in newspapers like the *Guardian*, *Sunday Herald*, and *Der Spiegel*.

The design is spelled out in a document called *The Project for the New American Century*, produced in 1997 (accessible online). *The Project* mapped out 'America's global leadership', and was prepared, among others, by Dick Cheney (now Vice-President), Donald Rumsfeld (now Secretary of Defense), Richard Perle (now Chairman of the Policy Board), and Paul Wolfowitz (now Under-Secretary of Defense). Thanks to reports and analyses published in mainly non-American newspapers like the German *Der Spiegel* and the British *Guardian*, the world would gradually learn about its existence.

The idea of *The Project* is to prepare the United States to be 'ready to lead military action, without regard for diplomacy'. The document states that 'in no circumstances should America's politics be crippled by the misguided insistence of the Security Council on unanimity'.

Another document obtained by the *Sunday Herald*, a British newspaper, was a copy of a confidential report produced by *The Project* in September 2000. The report suggested that blasting Saddam was the beginning, not the end, of its strategy. The wider strategic aim, it insisted, was 'maintaining global US pre-eminence' (Monibot 2003).

As I see it, the project to make the United States a leviathan of the twenty-first century comes from an underlying assumption that the United States has an unlimited capacity to act on its belief that the world consists of perpetual enemies. 'Our challenge,' according to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in a recent article in *Foreign Affairs*, 'is to defend our nation against the unknown, the uncertain, the unseen, and the unexpected.'

The problem with such an expression of realpolitik is that it lives on a darkly constructed image of the universe rather than on its multiplicity of experiences. The 'real' is, in fact, a paradigm of pessimism. The question remains whether the rest of the world is prepared to live as an American nightmare.

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11 When Osama and friends came a-calling

The political deployment of the overdetermined image of Osama ben Laden in the contestation for Islamic symbols in Malaysia

Farish A. Noor

Summary

This chapter looks at how the image of Osama ben Laden and the Taliban movement of Afghanistan have come to play such an important role in the local political dynamics of present-day Malaysia. Its historical focus is the period from 2000 to the present, when the figure of Osama ben Laden came into popular public view in the political arena, and the analysis offered is set against the backdrop of the Islamization race in Malaysia, which has been rooted in the intra-communal struggle for the control and representation of the Malay–Muslim majority in the country.

Malaysia embarked on its 'Islamization race' in 1981, with the coming to power of the country's fourth Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamed, who was also President of the ruling UMNO Party. From the beginning, the Mahathir Administration had sought to propagate and impose its own brand of 'statist Islam' that was based on a chain of equivalences that equated 'Mahathir's Islam' with modernity, economic progress, and material development. This was part of an ambitious project to reinvent Islam from within as well as a tactical move to outflank the country's biggest Malay–Muslim opposition party, PAS. But the Islamization race that followed was one that was more symbolic in nature, and a host of relevant and popular Islamic symbols were mobilized in the effort (by both sides) to present their image of 'pure', 'authentic', and 'correct' Islam. In the midst of this struggle that was fought on both a political and discursive level, Islamic symbols played a crucial role in the theater of national politics.

The chapter focuses mainly on the events that have followed in the wake of the 11 September tragedy – where the image of Osama ben Laden was conjured up by many (if not all) the major Islamist movements and parties in the country in an effort to bolster their claims to legitimacy, purpose, and identity – up to the aftermath of the Second Gulf Mar of February–April 2003. Our thesis will be that in the case of Osama and other such Islamic/Muslim images and symbols, these popular icons have been reduced to overdetermined empty signifiers that were used to communicate other meanings and intentions for the sake of imme-

diate and local political gains. By doing so, the universal image and message of Osama has been compromised and/or effaced altogether as it was translated via the prism of the local and specific.

Introduction: shopping for heroes in the global village's market of symbols

> Power and Politics do not pre-exist Culture. On the contrary, they are culturally constructed. … It is in culture that people fashion power and the acceptance of it. If power and its transmutation through a process of legitimisation into authority is intrinsically a cultural phenomenon, then Culture itself is inherently political. The fundamental question therefore is not the mechanics but the *symbolics* of power.
>
> (Kessler 1992: 135)[1]

My name is Osama and I fear nothing[2]

Thus read the slogan emblazoned on the T-shirt of a Chinese youth strolling down Tiananmen Square in Beijing, witnessed by a Western reporter who happened to walk by with camera in hand. Osama ben Laden has become a global cult figure, status symbol, and fashion icon. During a field trip to the Southern Thai province of Satun in late 2002, we chanced upon a Thai–Muslim T-shirt and poster vendor who was selling T-shirts with the image of Osama printed on them. Next to the Osama T-shirts hung another one that carried the image of the equally gruff and macho-looking Che Guevara. We asked the vendor who he thought Guevara was. His reply (and it may well have been an honest one) was: 'Osama's brother of course'. Globalization has created a global village and the village market is a riot of floating signifiers and symbols.

That we now live in a globalized world is a fact that no society can deny or reject. Globalization has made its presence felt in even the remotest corners of the world and today it can no longer be said that there exist any localities that are truly insular. The boundaries of time and space have collapsed and the parochial is now a thing of the past. The multiple geographies and epistemologies of the world are now in close proximity (if not overlapping) with each other. The global has become localized, as the local has become globalized.

This chapter sets out to examine the complex developments that took place in Malaysia in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks on New York and the Pentagon in the United States. In particular it aims to study the ways and means through which the events in the United States were seen, understood, and recontextualized in the local Malaysian context by the two main Malay–Muslim parties in the country, the ruling United Malays Nationalist Organization (UMNO)[3] Party and the main Malay–Muslim opposition Pan-Malaysian Islamist party (PAS)[4].

We intend to assess the impact of globalization on local political and cultural

spheres, and how events in one part of the world can have long-term cons equences for others if and when they are recontextualized and adapted to local needs according to the idiom of the locally specific. Our thesis is that the events of September 11 – occurring as they did in a country that is a superpower and whose hegemonic grip on the rest of the globe is undeniable – had an indirect impact on other localities far away. The locality in question here is the discursive and political terrain of Malaysia, and the events of September 11 were interpreted and used by both UMNO and PAS as a trigger for further political mobilization on the local level. The success of these parties' tactics depended, however, on their reading of the event itself and how it was going to be interpreted by the local Malaysian public – which happens to be a highly complex and heterodox constituency divided along cleavages of race, ethnicity, religion, and class.

11 September and after: how an event thousands of miles away impacted on the political terrain of Malaysia

On September 11, 2001, an event that took place on the other side of the world became the latest unforeseen variable to shape the political terrain of Malaysia. In the early hours of that September morning, the twin towers of the World Trade Center (WTC) in New York were rammed by two airliners hijacked by unknown individuals. Minutes later, both towers 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 that was intercepted and shot down before it could reach its intended target – the White House.[5] To bring home the reality of the events that took place thousands of miles away, the Kuala Lumpur Commercial 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 who were missing or killed in the New York attacks.

As the events following the aftermath of the attack were broadcast all over the world by American media channels like CNN, emotions ran high. A shocked and bewildered American public soon became angry, frustrated, and vengeful. Adding fuel to the fire were the American media that immediately pointed a finger of accusation to Islamist militant movements and, according to their critics, the Muslim world at large. The editorials of American newspapers 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' that was poised to take over the free world.

The paranoia and xenophobia stoked by the media was soon echoed by the establishment itself. The US government responded with calls for revenge and retribution, and in the days that followed the President of the United States,

George W. Bush, vowed that those responsible for the attacks would be made to pay and that the United States will lead the new global 'Crusade' against terrorism – an unfortunate choice of words that only added to the confusion and anxiety of the time.[6]

Coming as it did 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 event of September 11 forced the political elite of the Muslim world to take sides. This fact was driven home by the President of the United States himself, who bluntly stated that '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 the Saudi dissident-turned-fugitive Osama ben Laden and his al-Qaeda group that was based in Afghanistan. The fact that Osama was based in Afghanistan also meant that the Taliban regime there was brought into the picture. By drawing a link between the attacks and Osama and the Taliban, the US 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 United States to Southeast Asia.[7]

The US establishment was clearly trying to give the impression that this was a global problem that was not confined to the United States alone. Numerous experts in public relations were drafted to the cause and given the task of helping the Bush Administration get its message across to a wider audience. But the declaration of a 'global crusade' against 'Islamic terrorism' had only succeeded in antagonizing vast sections of the global Muslim community when it was the last thing the United States needed to do. The inept handling of the complex and sensitive matter of cooperation with Muslim governments also helped to ignite local tensions that had been simmering under the surface in many of the Muslim countries. The first to suffer were the governments of countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and the Philippines, all of which were facing growing unrest thanks to the activities of local Islamist opposition movements within their own borders.

Pakistan's government under General-turned-President Pervez Musharraf was brought into the US-led coalition as its most problematic and reluctant partner with the use of a somewhat oversized carrot and an overly endowed stick. 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 the major cities of the country, courtesy of Islamist parties like Jama'at-e Islami (JI) and Jamiat'ul Ulama-e Islam (JUI). To compound matters further, Pakistan's entry into the US-led coalition, reluctant though it was, infuriated many senior leaders of the

armed forces and intelligence services who had been working with the Taliban and the numerous Jihadi and mujahideen groupings in the country all along.[8]

In neighboring Indonesia, groups like the Front Pembela Islam and Lashkar Jihad were immediately mobilized and took to the streets as soon as the United States announced its unilateral move to confront its foes abroad. But like Pakistan, Indonesia was also caught in dire straits of its own. The country's 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 spiraling debt problem was also put on the agenda. Realpolitik considerations aside, the Islamist parties and movements in Indonesia were less pragmatic in their approach to the problem. The Indonesian president was warned 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.

The Philippines was likewise forced to deal with a backlash from Islamist groups and movements in the troubled island province of Mindanao in the south. Soon after the American 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. (As the crisis developed, hysteria and paranoia quickly overcame the redoubt of reason and common sense. There were even suggestions that Osama, like some Saudi Pimpernel, had somehow managed to escape from his lair in Afghanistan and was now in hiding with the Abu Sayyaf in the lush tropical undergrowth of Mindanao.)

The September 11 attacks thus had many long-term and far-flung consequences for Muslim and non-Muslim relations. For the countries in Asia 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. Worse still, the fear of Islamic militancy was exploited by some as a convenient way to whip up anti-Muslim sentiment, disguised as part of the now-global 'War on Terror'. In Southeast Asia the worst affected countries were the Philippines – where fears of renewed militancy on the part of Islamist movements in the south were intensified – and Indonesia, which experienced its own national tragedy with the bombing of tourist spots in Bali that only contributed to the weakening of its tattered economy. Like its neighbors Indonesia and the Philippines, Malaysia was likewise drawn into the fray at the least opportune moment.[9]

Jihad comes home: the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party's reaction to the US-led campaign against Osama ben Laden and the Taliban

> 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.
>
> (Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, 17 November 2001)[10]

The attacks on New York that took place on September 11 caught the Malaysian government by surprise. For the government of Dr. Mahathir, it would be yet another unsolicited external variable that would have to be dealt with in the same way like the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Salman Rushdie *Satanic Verses* controversy, the Gulf War, the Bosnian conflict, and the war in Chechnya. Then, as now, external variables such as these had only forced the stakes in the Islamization contest between the state and the Islamist opposition, and widened the gulf between UMNO and PAS.

The Afghan conflict of the 1980s, for instance, compelled the UMNO-led Malaysian government to commit itself to a pro-Islamic stand thanks to pressure from the Islamist opposition parties and movements at home. It was during this time that we begin to get the first reports of Malaysians going to Pakistan to join the ranks of the Afghan mujahideen. Most of them traveled from Malaysia to Islamabad or Karachi and then to Peshawar, then on to recruitment and training camps in the tribal areas along the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) before entering Afghanistan. It was well known that a number of young PAS members and supporters had become involved in militant activities outside the country by then. Some of the more committed members of the party (like C. N. Al-Afghani and Fauzi Ismail) had actually left the country in order to train as mujahideen in places like Peshawar in Pakistan. The deaths of young men like Fauzi Ismail and Abdul Aziz Samad in battlefields far away added to PAS's image as a party that was committed to the struggle of Islam and the jihad against its enemies.[11] UMNO could only fight a rearguard action against the encroachment of the Islamists on their primary constituency, the Malay–Muslims.

But the Islamization race between UMNO and PAS that was being accelerated thanks to external variable factors such as these only contributed to the inflation of Islamist discourse in the country and the raising of the level of public expectations. During the Bosnian conflict the Malaysian government played a leading role in voicing the concerns of the Muslim community worldwide. But by the time of the Chechnyan conflict, the government's vigorous defense of Muslims abroad was comparatively dampened thanks to the growing influence of Islamic radicalism in its own backyard.[12]

Even before the attacks on September 11, 2001, the Malaysian government was already taking the threat of growing Islamist militancy in Malaysia seriously.

Political leaders, senior members of government, and heads of the state's 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 days of intense UMNO–PAS rivalry and conflict in the 1980s terms like jihad had begun to penetrate deeper into the terrain of popular political discourse and these 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 June 2000 the Malaysian public was stunned by the sudden revelation that a major arms heist had taken place in the town of Gerik in Perak. The heist was carried out by a group of fifteen men who were dressed in army uniforms driving in Pajero jeeps painted green to look like Malaysian Army vehicles. After infiltrating the two army camps, they managed to get away with more than a hundred pieces of military hardware including hand-held rocket launchers, machine guns, and automatic rifles. The group was finally tracked down to its hideout in Sauk, where it was encircled by government security forces and the army. After a brief siege and shoot-out, the members of the group were forced to surrender, but not before they had killed two of their (non-Muslim) hostages.

In the trial and investigation that followed, it was revealed that those responsible for the arms heist were members of a local Malay *silat* (martial arts) group called al-Maunahled by an ex-army corporal named Mohammad Amin Razali. They were accused of trying to topple the Malaysian government and to overthrow the king in order to bring about an Islamic state by force of arms. The al-Maunah group was put under surveillance and ten of its leaders were sentenced to ten years' imprisonment each. The Islamic party PAS claimed that the entire episode was a government-orchestrated '*sandiwara*' (play-acting) that was meant to tarnish the name of Islam and Islamist movements in general. The government accused PAS of having sympathy with such movements, but to its embarrassment it was soon revealed that some of the al-Maunah members also belonged to the ruling UMNO Party.

In the same month that the al-Maunah group was arrested and put on trial, a second 'Islamist militant' group was identified in the country. This was the so-called 'Jihad gang' that was alleged to be responsible for a number of bank robberies, kidnappings, and murders in the country. The group was also accused of several attacks on non-Muslim places of worship, attacks on business premises they regarded as *haram* (unlawful) in Islam, and the murder of an Indian Member of Parliament. (MP Joe Fernandez of the Malaysian Indian Congress Party). After a failed robbery attempt on a bank, two members of the gang were wounded and taken into custody. Once under police custody the wounded members of the gang were made to confess and during their interrogation they revealed the identities of themselves and their fellow gang members. The group was finally rounded up by June 7. The Malaysian authorities then revealed that

most of the members of the gang had participated in numerous jihad campaigns in Afghanistan and Ambon, Indonesia. Many of them were also graduates from foreign Islamic universities and madrasahs in Pakistan, Egypt, and the Arab states.

In the following year (August 2001) the government had detained ten Islamist activists – many of whom were members of PAS – on the grounds that they belonged to an underground militant group called the Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM, Malaysian Mujahideen Movement). The leader of the group was said to be Ustaz Nik Adli Nik Aziz Nik Mat,[13] the 34-year-old son of the Murshid'ul Am (Spiritual Leader) of PAS, Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat. Though Nik Adli was only a teacher at a religious school in the state of Kelantan (of which has father was the Chief Minister), the authorities claimed that he had studied in the madarashs of Pakistan and that he had spent time training and working with the mujahideen in Afghanistan. Several of the other men arrested had also traveled to Pakistan for religious education and military training with the mujahideen operating along the Pakistani–Afghan border.[14]

On September 25, Nik Adli was placed in detention for two years under the ISA. The son of the Murshid'ul Am of PAS was accused of plotting a campaign to establish Islamic rule across the region. 'Your actions were aimed at toppling the government through an armed struggle and replacing it with a pure Islamic state comprising Indonesia, Mindanao and Malaysia' read the detention order. Nik Adli was also alleged to have been planning to overthrow the Malaysian government, plotting assassinations, and sending Muslim fighters to fight Christians in Indonesia's Maluku Islands. His period of alleged military training in Afghanistan in the early 1990s was also listed in the list of accusations, but there was no overt allegation of direct links to the Taliban or the al-Qaeda network of Osama ben Laden.

PAS's official media organ *Harakah* described the arrests of the KMM members as part of the Mahathir Administration's attempt 'to woo the Americans'.[15] The paper also claimed that PAS would intensify its efforts to show how UMNO was anti-Islam.[16] For the leaders of PAS, the arrest of veteran mujahideen fighters in Malaysia was something totally incomprehensible. PAS regarded its ex-mujahideen members as role models for the rank and file of the party, and their commitment to the Islamist struggle was seen as exemplary forms of conduct to be emulated, not criminalized. The leader of the Kelantan Youth Wing of the party, Takiyuddin Hassan, claimed that such commitment and willingness to sacrifice their lives 'could only come from those who were committed to the Islamist struggle', and that PAS was 'proud of the fact that its members were willing and able to make such sacrifices in the name of their religion'.[17]

In the same month that PAS members were being rounded up, 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 the East Malaysian state of Sabah 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 the 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 after, the governments of Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines issued a series of statements to the effect that they would henceforth be increasing the level of cooperation among their intelligence and security services to deal with the problem of religious militancy in Southeast Asia. The gravity of the situation was made more apparent when the 26-year-old Malaysian youth Taufik Abdul Halim was blown up in a shopping mall in Jakarta by an explosive device that he was carrying himself. His intention was to detonate the device in the shopping center at a time when it would be full of customers.[18]

While the political temperature in Malaysia was rising yet again, the country witnessed a number of financial and political scandals that could not have come at a worse time for the Mahathir Administration. One particular scandal which helped to give the Islamist opposition the added leverage that they sought was the financial crisis within the Lembaga Tabung Haji (Hajj Pilgrims Management Fund) which reported a loss of several hundred million ringgit, allegedly due to financial wrong-doings by a number of administrators in the body as well as other major financial losses due to poor investments made elsewhere.[19]

As if that was not enough, the Malaysian government was soon forced to issue a series of public denials in response to reports by foreign press agencies that the country had become a hub for transnational Islamist networks and terrorist organizations. The Prime Minister's Department and the Ministry of Finance categorically denied that terrorist funds had been deposited in Malaysian bank accounts and financial houses.

Thus matters had already come to a head in Malaysia and the other countries of the ASEAN region long before the two hijacked jetliners crashed into the twin towers of the WTC. The attacks on New York and the global media campaign that followed in their wake merely accelerated the deterioration of relations between the government of Malaysia and the Islamic opposition in the country. Here was a case of a global event having a multiplier effect on what was a local and domestic political struggle.

The tide turns yet again: PAS's response to the American bombing of Afghanistan and after

> Kewajiban berjihad ini menjadi tanggungjawab mereka yang berada di negeri yang diserang dan negeri yang bersempadan dengannya, sementara umat Islam

> yang berada jauh dari tempat kejadian wajib memberi perhatian dan sumbangan.[20]
>
> Hadi Awang: Jihad Adalah Perisai Umat Islam (Tuan Guru Ustaz Abdul Hadi Awang, quoted in *Harakah*, October 19, 2001)

On 7 October, after nearly four weeks of tension and nervous anticipation, the United States finally struck.

In a series of late-night sorties, American cruise missiles rained down upon a number of military targets in Afghanistan, including Taliban training camps near Kabul, Kunduz, Mazar-e Sharif, and Kandahar. American and British jets soon broke down the defenses of the country, leaving ordinary Afghan civilians at the mercy of their newfound enemies. The response from the Islamist movements worldwide came as fast as the news of the attacks was spread via the Internet.

The following day, Malaysia's Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir openly stated his dissatisfaction with the US-led attack. In a press conference held in Parliament, the Prime Minister said 'war against these countries will not be effective in fighting terrorism'.[21] 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.[22] 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 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'.[23]

On the same day (October 8) the leaders of PAS came out with their strongest statement yet against the Americans. For the Murshid'ul Am of PAS, Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat, the attack on Afghanistan was clearly an attack on Islam and Muslims in general. Speaking out in defense of the Taliban government, he claimed that:

> The US hates the *Taliban* because the latter is firmly committed to upholding Islamic values. Osama bin Laden is just an excuse for the US, which has time and again shown its hostility towards Islam, to wage war against the religion.[24]

PAS's President Ustaz Fadzil Noor also stated not only that the attacks were against Afghanistan's Taliban regime but that they constituted a direct assault on Muslims the world over. Speaking to local and foreign journalists in a press conference of his own, Fadzil Noor said that 'America has attacked a small and defenceless country like Afghanistan without showing the world strong reason or proof, (and) they are war criminals'.[25] He then added: 'If the Americans are really waging a war against terrorism, why don't they attack Israel, who are terrorists against the Palestinians?'[26] The President of the Islamist Party ended

the interview with a clarion call to arms when he stated that: 'all Muslims must oppose these criminals – this time, there is no denying a call for *Jihad*'.[27]

PAS based its critique of the US-led international effort on several premises. The first was the claim that there was no direct proof and evidence that Osama ben Laden and/or the Taliban were directly involved in the attacks on New York and the Pentagon. Secondly, the leaders of PAS argued that the terrorist attacks themselves were fundamentally a reaction against US foreign policy and the fact that US conduct in the Arab world was seen to have a pro-Zionist, pro-Israel slant to it. For them it was the United States, and not Osama or the Taliban, that was the real terrorist state in the world. Thirdly, PAS also claimed that the entire operation was linked to a broader American–Zionist agenda to demonize Islam and to weaken any Muslim state that was prepared to challenge the hegemonic might of the United States anywhere in the world.

The logic of PAS's critique was couched in terms of oppositional dialectics that pit the West against the Muslim world. Having drawn a chain of equivalences between the United States, Western Europe, Israel, and the so-called 'Zionist conspiracy' to overthrow and dominate the Muslim world, PAS also drew a second chain of equivalences which linked together Islam, the Taliban, Osama ben Laden, and themselves as the defenders of Islam and the Muslim *Ummah*. What eventually emerged was a zero-sum logic of confrontation which – like George Bush's now-infamous 'you are with us or against us' statement – left no middle ground for waverers and neutral parties.

Things finally came to a climax on October 10 when PAS declared a jihad against the United States and its coalition partners and gave the go-ahead for its members to openly join and support the Taliban. The party's Secretary-General Nashruddin Mat Isa stated that: 'If there are any PAS members who would like to go for *jihad*, we cannot stop them because *jihad* is a religious duty. They don't need to seek party approval if they wish to take up the fight in Afghanistan.'[28]

Soon after PAS leaders like Fadzil Noor, Mohamad Sabu, and Mahfuz Omar were calling for a total boycott of all American goods and services, and even for the Malaysian government to send troops to Afghanistan to help resist the US-led attacks.[29]

The Malaysian government wasted no time before it reacted to this latest turn of events. On October 11, six alleged 'militants' were arrested and detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) on the grounds that they were part of a clandestine underground network that was plotting to overthrow the country by using terrorist tactics. Five of the men concerned were religious teachers based in various madrasahs all over the country and they were all said to be part of the KMM led by the son of the Murshid'ul Am of PAS himself, Ustaz Nik Adli Nik Mat.

These arrests had little effect on the resolve of the Islamist opposition, though. Immediately after Friday *Juma'ah* prayers on October 12, PAS leaders called for a massive gathering outside the US embassy in the diplomatic quarter of Ampang, Kuala Lumpur. The gathering was meant to serve as a show of support for PAS leaders who intended to deliver a memorandum to the US

ambassador (who had just been posted to the capital) and to demonstrate PAS's endorsement of Osama ben Laden and the Taliban. Though the event was meant to be a peaceful gathering, the mood had been set by the leaders of PAS themselves who had been vocally condemning the United States over the past few weeks. (Just before the demonstration the Internet version of the party's paper, Harakahdaily.com, featured a photo of the President of the Party Fadzil Noor and the Head of its Youth Wing Mahfuz Omar burning the flag of the United States at a PAS rally.)

By 2.00 p.m. about 3500 PAS supporters showed up to demonstrate in front of the embassy. Most of them had come directly from the mosques located at the KLCC and Tabung Haji complex nearby, and many more came from the mosques in Kampung Baru and Kampung Datuk Keramat. This was certainly the biggest demonstration that had been organized in Kuala Lumpur after the *reformasi* demonstrations of 1998. But this time round, the mood and tenor of the gathering had an altogether different edge to it. Many of the younger members of the party were wearing T-shirts, banners, and armbands with slogans like *Allahuakbar*,*Lailla ha illallah*, and *Jihad* on them. Placards and banners were hoisted with slogans like 'Stop the War', 'We love Jihad', 'Crush America', 'Taliban/Afghans are our brothers' written on them.

Some of the major leaders of PAS who were present, like Fadzil Noor, Mustafa Ali, and Nashruddin Mat Isa, were finally allowed to enter the embassy to deliver their memorandum. Others like Mohamad Sabu were there to fire up the crowd with speeches. (At least one PAS leader – Hatta Ramli – was on hand to calm down the demonstrators, but to no avail.) The mood turned ugly when the police ordered the crowd to disperse. Just as the PAS supporters began to line up to perform their prayers (*solat hajat*) in fron of the entrance of the embassy, the armored police truck let loose a blast from its water cannon and doused the crowd with chemical-laced water. PAS's noisy and emotional demonstration had shown just how far the party was prepared to go to get its point across. But what the leaders of the party did not account for was the reaction that was to follow.

Back in the dock: the reversal of PAS's fortunes in the wake of the Afghan bombing crisis

The reaction to PAS's demonstration of force came from two important quarters. Firstly, the non-Malay and non-Muslim communities in the country – already shocked by PAS's declaration of jihad and show of support for the Taliban – were appalled by the rhetoric and tenor of the Friday demonstration. The local non-Malay press gave significant coverage to the event, with photos of PAS supporters marching in the streets and quotes from the PAS leaders themselves. PAS's call for a jihad against the 'enemies of Islam' clearly had a negative impact on the perception of PAS by the non-Muslims in the country. Overnight, fears of renewed religious militancy were rekindled thanks to the fiery rhetoric of the PAS leaders and followers themselves. These fears were intensified even further as a number of churches were attacked and burnt in different parts of

the country. The Christian Federation of Malaysia later issued a statement claiming that those responsible for the arson attacks were motivated by anti-Christian sentiments aroused in the wake of September 11, though they did not single out PAS as the main culprit.[30]

Soon after the non-Malay parties in the Barisan Nasional began to lend their weight as well. The Women's Wing of the MCA (Wanita MCA) organized a number of public forums to discuss the problem of religious militancy and the controversial issue of the Islamic state in Malaysia. The Vice-President of the Gerakan Party, Dr. S. Vijayaratnam, argued that the governments of the West (and the United States in particular) should 'review whatever positive perceptions' they may have had of PAS in the light of recent developments within the party itself and the stand that it chose to take over the Afghan issue.[31]

The other constituency to be affected by PAS's sudden reversion to radical politics was the international diplomatic and business community. Already worried about the political instability in the region as a whole, the latest developments in Malaysia did not go down well with foreign investors who were already worried about the safety of their investments in the country.

Unaware (or oblivious to) the negative image that it would create for itself at home and abroad, PAS's decision to support the Taliban and declare a jihad against the West was the biggest own-goal scored by the party against itself over the past few years. By publicly voicing its stand in favor of Osama and the Taliban the party had alienated itself from vast sections of the local and international community, and pushed itself back to the margins of the local political scene. For many local and foreign observers, it was as if the veil had finally fallen, and PAS had revealed its true self at last. Despite the fact that the more urbane and polished technocrats within the party had been speaking the language of democracy and human rights for the past few years, it was now clear where the sympathies and loyalties of the *Ulama* leadership really lay. The image of the young PAS supporter with clenched fist in the air, wearing an Osama ben Laden T-shirt and shouting 'destroy the American *kafirs* and Jews', dealt a major blow to the image of the Islamist party in the same way that the image of the ex-DPM Anwar Ibrahim with a black eye had dealt a major blow to the credibility of the state's security and judicial institutions three years earlier.

The situation was exploited to the full by the Mahathir Administration, which saw it as the best justification for its own policies vis-à-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 clear when the US 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'.[32] The United States then extended its thanks to the Mahathir Administration for the support it had shown to the United States 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 US$38 billion (RM144 billion) a year and the United States was, after all, Malaysia's biggest trading partner abroad. (Under such circumstances, it was difficult to comprehend the rationale behind PAS's calls for a trade boycott against the United States, which made little sense to the Malaysian business community in particular.)

The US 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 as '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.

The newly improved relationship between Kuala Lumpur and Washington was also reflected in the new understanding between the two governments. The US Trade Representative spoke not only about economic matters but also raised a number of concerns related to security issues. In his meeting with the Malaysian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Syed Hamid Albar, the two men discussed the various strategies and tactics that could be used to combat the phenomenon of international 'Islamic terrorism'. Later the US Pacific Fleet Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Dennis Cutler Blair (who was on a tour of ASEAN), praised the Malaysian government for its help in the global campaign against international terrorism and vowed that Malaysian and US armed forces and security services would cooperate even more in the future against the threat of terrorist networks and militant cells posing a security threat to both countries.[33]

This new understanding would later be cemented when the leaders of Malaysia and the United States finally met for the first time (on October 20) at the APEC conference held in Shanghai a few weeks later. After the meeting between Dr. Mahathir and George Bush, both men agreed to seek ways and means to combat the threat of international terrorism and to increase the level of cooperation in both trade and security matters.

Back on the home front the Mahathir Administration added the final touches to a package of political and economic policies that was designed to maintain public order and get the economy back on the road to recovery. On September 29, 2001, Dr. Mahathir suddenly announced that there was no need for PAS to push its demands for further Islamization as Malaysia was already 'an Islamic country' and that the whole Muslim world regarded Malaysia as a model Islamic state. The new budget that was revealed on October 19 was aimed at jump-starting the economy and to help medium-scale local entrepreneurs and civil servants in particular.[34]

More good news for the Mahathir Administration was soon to follow: On

November 14 the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) which had left the UMNO-led Barisan Nasional (BN) ruling coalition on the eve of the 1990 general elections and which had been the sole opposition party in the East Malaysian state of Sabah finally declared that it would rejoin the BN. Less than a week later, the President of the Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM), Ahmad Azzam Abdul Rahman, publicly stated that ABIM felt that Dr. Mahathir was indeed a 'model Muslim leader' and that Malaysia was a 'model Islamic society' for the rest of the Muslim world to follow. The apparent U-turn by one of the biggest Islamist movements in the country provided the UMNO-led BN government with more room to maneuver and it meant that PAS's desire to mobilize Malay–Muslim support behind its calls for jihad had failed. With DAP out of the Barisan Alternatif (BA) opposition front and Keadilan in tatters, PAS was well and truly isolated and marginalized.

Having lost on the home front, PAS turned its attention to the outside world instead. On November 16, the ASEAN Muslim Secretariat (AMSEC) which was under the auspices of PAS and based in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, organized a regional conference on global terrorism. The conference was attended by representatives from Muslim organizations from all over the ASEAN region, including countries like Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. At the end of the conference, the Secretary-General of AMSEC, Mahfuz Omar (who was also Head of the PAS Youth Wing), read out a joint statement where the delegates at the conference condemned the United States as the biggest terrorist state and described George Bush and Ariel Sharon as the two most wanted terrorists in the world.[35]

But even then PAS was no longer able to muster the support that it needed in its campaign at home. A host of internal and external factors ranging from PAS's tactical blunder in supporting the Taliban's call for jihad, the growing concern over the threat of international terror, the renewed violence in some parts of the ASEAN region like the southern Philippines and Indonesia, and the mood swing of the populace had ensured that PAS's advances had been checked for a while at least.

It appeared as if PAS's gains over the past three years had been all but squandered, and that the party would once again have to begin at the grassroots level. (A fact borne out by the local university council elections that took place in the same week and which saw PAS and UMNO once again fighting out their proxy wars on the grounds of the local campuses.[36]) Thus it could be said that the event of September 11 did have long-lasting and far-reaching consequences indeed. As a result of that fateful attack on the WTC in New York, the face of Malaysian politics had been changed once more.

After Osama, enter Saddam Hussein

Barely a year after the US-led invasion of Afghanistan came whispers of another conflict against a Muslim country: Iraq.

By the middle of 2002 the political leadership in Washington was already

intimating that it would set its sights on Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath regime settled in Baghdad. In a matter of weeks Osama ben Laden slipped out of the picture and the void was filled by Saddam Hussein – erstwhile ally of the United States and the Arab dictator who was once celebrated by UNESCO as an exemplary Arab leader who paved the way for the modernization of his country and his people.[37] The US government first tried to justify the invasion of Iraq by trying to establish a link between the Iraqi regime and other terrorist organizations like Osama's al-Qaeda movement. The argument then shifted to the claim that Iraq was in possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and finally rested on the claim that a 'regime change' had to be effected in order to 'save' and 'liberate' the people of Iraq from their own government. The US-led initative failed, however, to gain external support and the United States could only count on its long-term ally Britain – under the leadership of Prime Minister Tony Blair and a Labour government – to fill the ranks of the thinly spaced 'coalition of the willing'.

The reaction from the Muslim world was of open and unreserved hostility, and from Morocco to Indonesia Islamist leaders and movements condemned the unilateral action of the United States as an open declaration of war against Islam and the Muslim world. Islamist opposition movements called on Muslims to boycott American goods such as fast foods and entertainment products, while Muslim retailers reported soaring sales of 'politically correct' Islamic products like Mecca Cola that had recently been launched in France. This reaction was echoed by other non-Muslim leaders as well, and the Pope issued a number of stern warnings and condemnations against both the American and British governments for their action. The newly appointed Archbishop of Canterbury went so far as bluntly stating that Tony Blair's support for US military aggression was wholly un-Christian, and that the British Prime Minister had no right to base his actions on any religious grounds. In the meantime Saddam Hussein replaced Osama ben Laden as the most visible and widely circulated image of radical Islam in the global media.

Saddam Hussein had made headlines in the early 1990s as a result of the first Gulf War and the image of Saddam as popular anti-American icon was already in circulation all over Malaysia and Indonesia by the 1990s. This time round Saddam would make a second appearance in Malaysian Islamist circles as the embodiment of radical Islamism and anti-Americanism, though the nature of the conflict – which was both uneven and lacked the legal sanction of the United Nations – meant that popular sympathy for Saddam Hussein and the people of Iraq was greater and wider than was the case for the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

PAS was not the only Islamist movement that bitterly opposed the US-led war against Iraq: popular opposition against the US action came from all quarters of Malaysian society, from the Malaysian Council of Churches (which, following the example shown by the Pope and the Vatican, held a nation-wide Sunday mass for the sake of the Iraqi civilians) to secular Malaysian human rights NGOs like ALIRAN, JUST, SUARAM, and HAKAM.

PAS, for its part, had learnt the lesson from the Afghan conflict of 2001–2002: This time round the leaders of the Islamist party were less inclined to issue blanket condemnations against the West *in toto*, and the rhetoric of jihad and holy war was visibly restrained. Though the Islamist party did organize huge demonstrations and prayer sessions in the two states under its control – Kelantan and Trengganu in the north – it was careful not to heighten the level of tension that was already high in the country.

UMNO, on the other hand, tried its best to turn the situation to its advantage by tapping into popular anti-Americanism that was evident across all sections of Malaysian society. The Youth Wing (Pemuda UMNO) of the UMNO Party, along with the youth wings of the other component parties of the ruling National Front (BN) organized a mass-based nation-wide anti-war movement called Aman Malaysia (Peace Malaysia) that was aimed to bring together the various components of Malaysian society against the war (led by the ruling UMNO Party, of course). PAS expressed little interest in working with this movement, though Aman Malaysia did received the support of the Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (ABIM), the biggest Islamist NGO in the country.

The leaders of PAS expressed their skepticism for UMNO's Aman Malaysia venture and pointed out that despite the anti-war rhetoric of the Mahathir Administration, the Malaysian government was still a close military and strategic ally of the United States and that the Malaysian government had agreed to set up a regional anti-terror center in Malaysia that would serve the entire ASEAN region, with the help of US intelligence personnel from the CIA and FBI. This in itself proved that the Mahathir Administration was still working hand-in-glove with the Americans, and that the anti-war rhetoric of the Malaysian government was a mere surface phenomenon. PAS leaders also argued that the Malaysian government was in no position to condemn the actions of the United States, or accuse the latter of human rights abuses, considering the fact that more than seventy alleged 'Islamist militants' had been arrested and detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) and were not given the right to a free and open trial before a court of law.

In the event, the Second Gulf War began in mid-February 2003 and ended a month later with the fall of the Saddam Hussein government and the mysterious disappearance of its leader. By then the Mahathir Administration was secure in its seat of power, while PAS was once against back where it started: marginalized on the stage of national politics. Despite its attempts to salvage its public image, PAS's appearance as a militant and radical Islamist party that was generated during the first Afghan conflict had stuck. In the country survey on Malaysia published by *The Economist* magazine on 5 May 2003, PAS was described as a conservative, reactionary, and radical party with the 'fundamentalists (in it) having the upper hand'. The report also noted the Islamist party leadership's desire to impose *Sharia* law and *Hudud* punishments all over the country and their 'enthusiasm for cutting off hands'.[38]

Conclusion: lessons from September 11 and the Second Gulf War of 2003 – the impact of external variable factors on the domestic politics of Malaysia

The September 11 tragedy and its aftermath are a classic example of how a localized event can take on global proportions and have a long-term effect on other localities in other parts of the world. Temporal and spatial orders have collapsed altogether in this rapidly shrinking world whose political and cultural geography has been reduced and narrowed thanks to globalization itself. The local has become the global, and vice versa.

Malaysia, as a developing country that is very much exposed to external cultural, economic, and political influences, is particularly vulnerable to such external variable factors. As the events of the past few months have shown, the impact of such external variables is never predictable and in the Malaysian case the consequences of September 11 have been exploited by all parties concerned for their own immediate political objectives. In the end, it was the government of Dr. Mahathir that managed to reap the most benefits from the event itself (thanks in part to the blunders by the Islamist opposition), and in the wake of the Afghan campaign has been able to successfully reposition itself in terms of not only the local political audience, but the international one as well.

The success of the Mahathir Administration was due partly to its correct reading of the reaction to the September 11 event. The UMNO-led BN government correctly estimated the sense of shock, horror, and apprehension that was bound to emerge in specific sections of the Malaysian community – the urban middle classes, the non-Malay, and non-Muslim minorities and the foreign business/diplomatic community. Sensing the growing sense of alarm among those who felt that Malaysia was in danger of being drawn into the web of international 'Islamic Terror', heads of state and leaders of UMNO in particular were quick to address the issue and to placate the fears of the general public. Nothing was spared in the effort to ensure the Malaysian (and international) community that the Malaysian state would remain on its secular, moderate, and capitalist course (even if the Islamic state debate had not died down in some quarters). UMNO leaders were careful to insist, time and again, that theirs was a brand of 'modern', 'progressive', 'liberal', and 'tolerant' Islam that would not allow itself to be hijacked by 'militant' and 'extremist' elements. Here was a case of a local political elite correctly interpreting the mood swings and shifts in perception that were bound to be brought about by the events that took place thousands of miles away in New York.

PAS, on the other hand, was held captive by its own local constituency. Failing to recognize the swing in public opinion, the leaders of PAS mistaken brought the party to the brink of ruin by declaring that they would support the jihad called for by Osama ben Laden and the Taliban. Seemingly unaware of the catastrophic results that were bound to follow (a strange and unexplainable factor indeed, considering PAS's long experience in the field of Malaysian politics), the PAS leadership pressed on regardless down a path that would only lead

to its marginalization and isolation in the country. Here was an example of a political party that totally failed to understand the magnitude and depth of the mood-swing in Malaysia, among both the Malays and non-Malays. While it is true that PAS managed to score points among their own natural followers, the Malay–Muslims, their losses concerning the general Malaysian public (and international opinion) were considerable.

As the events of September 11 have clearly shown, Malaysian politics is clearly plugged into the global current and is no longer isolated from external influences. As the country gravitates ever closer to the center of globalization's orbit, events such as the September 11 tragedy are bound to play an even bigger role in the domestic politics of Malaysia. The boundaries between 'inside' and 'outside' are no longer there. The frontiers of the imaginary homeland go as far as the cameras of CNN or the Al-Jazeera network will take you. Malaysia has entered the global stage, and the world has come knocking on its door bringing with it unprecedented challenges that can never be ignored.

Notes

1 From *Fragmented Vision: Culture and Politics in Contemporary Malaysia*, edited by Joel S. Kahn and Francis Loh Kok Wah. ASAA Southeast Asia Publication Series, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1992 (p. 135).

2 Quoted in Farish A. Noor, *The Image of Ben Laden*, in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 29, 2001.

3 The conservative–nationalist UMNO Party's roots lie in the First Malay Congress that was held in Kuala Lumpur on 1–4 March 1946. The congress discussed the plan to form PEKEMBAR (Persatuan Kebangsaan Melayu Bersatu), but later opted for the title UMNO (United Malays Nationalist Organization) instead. On May 11, 1946, the UMNO Party was officially launched at the Istana Besar (Grand Palace) of Johor Bharu. The first President of UMNO was Dato' Onn Jaafar. When the party was first established it was a broad and all-encompassing organization that included Malay political movements from across the entire political spectrum of the country. In time, though, the conservative character of UMNO came to the surface as the leftists and Islamists began to leave the organization to form parties of their own. In the 1950s and 1960s, UMNO was under the leadership of the royalist–aristocrat Tunku Abdul Rahman, who was also the country's first prime minister (between 1957 and 1969). The Tunku placed Malaysia on the initial path towards rapid development and during this period the country's foreign policy was clearly aligned to the West. The Tunku's era was also one where religion and politics was kept separate and the state did not attempt to play the religious card against its opponents. From 1970 to 1981, UMNO was under the leadership of Tun Abdul Razak (1970–1976) and Hussein Onn (1976–1981), both of whom kept the country on the same trajectory. A major shift in orientation occurred when UMNO came under the leadership of Dr. Mahathir Mohamed (1981) who took the country down the road of state-sponsored Islamization. But Dr. Mahathir's Islamization policy was also an attempt to outflank the growing Islamist opposition in the country as well as a calculated attempt to redefine the meaning, content, and expression of Islam and Muslim religiosity in terms that were compatible with modernity, progress, and economic prosperity. This happened when the Muslim world as a whole was experiencing a major resurgence of Islam and the opposition Islamist movements in Malaysia were rapidly gaining ground among the populace.

4 The nucleus of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party actually lay in the Bureau of Religious Affairs of the conservative–nationalist Malay party, UMNO. In 1951, PAS was formed under the leadership of Haji Fuad Hassan, who was the head of the UMNO Bureau of Religious Affairs. The radical nationalist and Islamist thinker Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmy was later invited to take over as president of PAS in December 1956. From 1956 to 1969, the combined leadership of Dr. Burhanuddin and Dr. Zulkiflee Muhammad (the party's vice-president) managed to broaden the political base of PAS and open it up to the rest of the Muslim world. In 1969 Dr. Burhanuddin passed away after being put in detention without trial by the Malaysian government. PAS then came under the leadership of Mohamad Asri Muda, who was a staunch defender of Malay rights and privileges. Asri Muda later brought PAS into the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition and out again (1973–1978). The period of Asri Muda's leadership was highly controversial one. After a leadership crisis that went out of control, the federal government declared a state of emergency in Kelantan in 1978. In 1982, Asri Muda was forced to step down by a new generation of Islamist *Ulama* who had infiltrated the party from ABIM and taken over. The 1980s and 1990s witnessed the radicalization of PAS as its new leaders began to confront the UMNO-led coalition government and the state apparatus on the grounds that the latter were 'secular', 'un-Islamic', and working in league with Western and Zionist interests. In 1990 PAS regained control of the state of Kelantan, and in 1999 it won control of Trengganu as well.

5 The attacks that began during the early hours of September 11 followed each other in rapid succession. At around 8.45 a.m., September 11, a hijacked American Airlines jet – Flight 11 – out of Boston, Massachusetts, crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center. Soon after, at around 9:03 a.m., a second hijacked airliner, United Airlines Flight 175 from Boston, crashed into the south tower of the World Trade Center and exploded. It was only by 9.17 a.m. that the Federal Aviation Administration shut down all New York City area airports. One hour after the first attack President George Bush, while speaking in Sarasota, Florida, stated that the country had suffered an 'apparent terrorist attack'. Minutes after the statement (at around 9.45 a.m.), another American Airlines jetliner –Flight 77 – crashed into the Pentagon. At 10.05 a.m.: the south tower of the World Trade Center collapsed. Soon after the second tower followed suit. Finally at 10.10 a.m. the fourth United Airlines jetliner – Flight 93 – crashed in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, southeast of Pittsburgh. The speed of the attacks made it extremely difficult for emergency measures to be taken effectively. What complicated matters further for the ground-level emergency staff was the fact that the two towers that were hit were extremely unstable. When the towers finally collapsed, scores of New York firemen and rescue workers were also trapped and killed by the falling debris.

6 George Bush's choice of the word 'crusade' was one of the first diplomatic blunders in a campaign that would later prove to be far more complex and difficult than it was earlier imagined. Immediately after uttering the word, the President of the United States was accused of insensitivity and ignorance by Muslim scholars and Islamist activists the world over. It was quite clear that the term 'crusade' still retained a historically specific meaning in many Muslim societies and that it brought back memories (rekindled thanks to the Islamists) of the inter-religious conflicts of the past. George Bush would later apologize for his earlier remark, but other gaffes were to follow – all of which only helped to widen the gulf between the US-led Western coalition and the Muslim states whose support they wanted to gain.

7 As the investigations into the networks behind the attack on New York intensified, more and more links were established with the countries of Southeast Asia. It was well known that many of the members of Osama ben Laden's al-Qaeda group were originally members of the Afghan mujahideen movement. The Taliban also recruited its members from the ranks of the mujahideen, who were made up of different

nationalities. A number of the mujahideen in Afghanistan and Pakistan were from Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia. Though their figures were very small compared to the volunteers from the Arab states, North Africa, Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and Western China, these volunteers played an important role in helping to establish links between the al-Qaeda network and the Taliban with Southeast Asia. There were also a number of Arab militants who later formed close links with their Southeast Asian counterparts. One of them was Ramzi Yusuf, a Pakistani veteran of the mujahideen conflict who had traveled to the Philippines with Filipino Muslim militants who had served with him in the Afghan wars. While in the Philippines, Yusuf worked with the local Islamist militia cells to plan covert operations against the Filipino government. One of his plans was to hijack American airliners that landed at Manila Airport. Yusuf was later implicated in the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993, and then arrested and imprisoned. When the Abu Sayyaf group took a number of Western hostages in 2000 in return for financial rewards and political concessions, one of their demands was the release of their old comrade Ramzi Yusuf.

8 In time, President Musharraf was forced to place the leaders of the Islamist parties (Maulana Fazlur Rahman and Sami'ul Haq of the Jamiat) under house arrest while stern warnings were issued to Qazi Hussein Ahmad and the leadership of the Jama'at. The president was also forced to remove a number of key military leaders in the army and the Inter Services Intelligence agency (ISI) like 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 their followers from spilling onto the streets, though, and the major cities of Pakistan soon hosted massive (and sometimes violent) demonstrations organized by pro-Taliban supporters in Pakistan itself.

9 Malaysia was unwittingly dragged into the investigations that followed in the wake of the September 11 attack. First came the news that a letter containing anthrax spores, sent to an address in the United States, originated from Malaysia. It was later discovered that the letter was not, after all, 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, one of the close associates of Osama ben Laden, had met with other associates in Malaysia previously in January 2000. Later a former member of bin Laden's al-Qaeda movement, Jamal Ahmed Al-Fadhl, also told a US court that money was deposited in Malaysia, which Malaysian authorities deny.

10 Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's keynote speech delivered at the Conference on Terrorism organized by the Institute for Strategic and International Studies (ISIS-Malaysia), Kuala Lumpur, November 17, 2001.

11 Abdul Aziz Samad was a Malay youth from the state of Selangor. His family were members of the UMNO Party but he eventually ended up becoming a supporter of the Islamist opposition in Malaysia. In 1988 he traveled to Afghanistan where he was killed fighting alongside the mujahideen forces. (Afghani 2000: 57). Fauzi Ismail was one of the ordinary members of PAS who traveled to Afghanistan to join and fight with the mujahideen during the Afghan War. He was born on September 1, 1962 in the village of Kampung Pantai Cicak, Kedah. His educational achievements during his youth were not of the highest order but he managed to reach the level of the Malaysian certificate of education (SPM). He did not receive any religious education, and was never enrolled at any of the local religious schools or madrasahs. Years later he traveled to Singapore to work as a contract laborer. After working in Singapore he returned to his state of Kedah where he opened a small sundry shop. It was here that he first became involved with PAS and he was soon elected as a member of the local committee of the PAS Youth Wing at Kampung Kelut. During the mid-1980s he involved himself in both PAS and ABIM educational activities, but soon withdrew from ABIM when he felt that the movement was not doing enough for the promotion

of Islam and an Islamic state in Malaysia. (Afghani 2000: 24). In 1988 he and a number of other PAS members left for Afghanistan to join the mujahideen in the war against the Soviet-backed forces of President Najibullah. In the conflict that followed, Fauzi took part in the battles for Khost and Jalalabad. During the siege of Jalalabad he was killed when the trench he was guarding was hit by a shell fired from an enemy tank. (For a fuller account of the life of Fauzi Ismail, see: C. N. Al-Afghani, *Dagangnya Dibeli Allah*, Penerbitan al-Jihadi, Memali, Kedah. 2000.)

12 The official stand taken by the Malaysian government during the Chechnyan conflict was that it was an 'internal security problem' that was entirely within the purview of the Russian government. At no point did the Malaysian government express support or sympathy for the Chechnyan resistance movement – though it did voice its concerns about the flagrant abuse of rights and numerous acts of terror committed by the Russian troops against the population of Chechnya.

13 Ustaz Nik Adli Nik Aziz was one of the sons of Tuan Guru Nik Aziz Nik Mat, the Murshid'ul Am (Spiritual Guide) of PAS and Chief Minister of Kelantan. In his youth he had been educated at both government and religious schools in his home state of Kelantan. He then traveled to Pakistan to study at the Jami'ah Dirasah Islamiah Madrasah in Karachi. After that he moved to Peshawar where he studied at the Ma'ahad Salman which was known to have close connections to the Deoband Seminary and madrasah networks. In was in Peshawar that Nik Adli was first introduced to Afghan fighters and members of the mujahideen. He then traveled to Afghanistan and took part in the mujahideen campaign against the Russians. Little is known about Nik Adli's mujahideen connections, save that he took part in numerous campaigns and left for Malaysia when the conflict had subsided. Back in Malaysia he taught at the religious school in Kampung Melaka (which happened to be his father's constituency) and lived an ordinary life. He was never involved in local PAS politics. In 1999 he was said to have taken over the leadership of the Kesatuan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM), a clandestine group that was formed by an ex-mujahideen and PAS activist, Zainon Ismail, on October 12, 1995. (Nik Adli's younger brother, Nik Abduh, was also educated in the Indian subcontinent. He studied at the Darul Ulum Deobandi Seminary in Deoband, North India.)

14 Those who were arrested included Zainon Ismail (who was said to be the original founder of the KMM), Mohamad Lutfi Arrifin (Member of the PAS Youth Wing of Kedah), Nor Ashid Sakip (Head of PAS Youth at Sungai Benut), Ahmad Tajudin Abu Bakar (Head of PAS Youth at Larut), Salehan Abdul Ghafar, Abu Bakar Che Doi, Alias Ghah, Ahmad Fauzi Daraman, and Asfawani Abdullah. Most of them were active members of PAS and religious school teachers by profession.

15 *Harakah*, August 16–31, 2001. *Tangkapan KMM di bawah ISA: Usaha PM Ambil Hati Amerika*, p. 17.

16 Ibid., p. 32.

17 Harakah, October 5, 2001. Pemuda PAS bangga ahlinya pernah berjihad:Takayuddin.

18 The youth in question was a 26-year-old Malay from Johor by the name of Taufik Abdul Halim. He was carrying the bomb in his bag to the shopping center in Jakarta when it blew up prematurely, causing him serious injuries which finally led to the loss of an arm. While in hospital he was placed under police custody and subsequently questioned by members of the Malaysian and Indonesian security forces about his involvement with a group of Islamist militants who were thought to be responsible for the bombing of several churches in Java as well. Indonesian security services claimed that a number of young Malays from the Peninsula were thought to be active in these Islamist militant cells operating in Java.

19 Between August and September 2001 the Lembaga Tabung Haji was in the headlines after Malaysian police arrested an administrative officer who was said to be responsible for losses up to RM7 million. It was alleged that the Tabung Haji official had

made up to fourteen withdrawals from the main branch of the Tabung Haji in Kuala Lumpur, Seremban, and Banting. The money was then supposed to have been stored in overseas offshore accounts, making it difficult to trace and retrieve. The scandal came shortly after the Tabung Haji had been incorporated and was a major blow to the image of the government. What made matters worse was the related disclosure that the Tabung Haji had also made other major losses thanks to poor investments, particularly in the palm oil industry, and the 'Technical Corridor' project in Negeri Sembilan (all of which amounted to a few hundred million ringgit). As the revelations of financial wrongdoings appeared in the local press, calls for a major shake-up of the administration were voiced by opposition parties and local NGOs. The leaders of PAS cited this as proof that the Islamization policy of the state had brought the country nowhere, and that even the Islamic institutions created by the UMNO-led government were riddled with corruption and cronyism. As the revelations were made public, the two men who were most closely linked to the institution – Dato' Hamid Othman (Religious Advisor to the Prime Minister) and Dato' Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin – were caught in the eye of the storm. In the end the Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir himself was forced to intervene directly and he finally called for an investigation into the financial management of the Tabung Haji itself. (See *Tabung Haji Bermasalah Selepas Dikorporatkan, Harakah*, September 16, 2001.)

20 Translation: 'The obligation for *Jihad* is the primary responsibility of those in the country that is being attacked and in the neighbouring countries, while it is obligatory for all Muslims who live elsewhere to give their support and show their concern.' *Hadi Awang: Jihad Adalah Perisai Umat Islam* (Quoted in *Harakah*, October 19, 2001).

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

22 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,October 8, 2001).

23 Ibid.

24 Mohd Irfan Isa, *Osama an excuse to wage war against Islam: Nik Aziz* (Malaysiakini.com, October 10, 2001)

25 Malaysiakini.com, *US embassy under guard, PAS labels Americans 'war criminals'.* (October 8, 2001).

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 See Nur Abdul Rahman, *Serangan Amerika langkah permusuhan ke atas umat Islam* (*Harakah*, October 11, 2001) and*PAS declares 'jihad' over attacks in Afghanistan* (Malaysiakini.com, October 10, 2001). Nashruddin was also quick to add that PAS's definition of jihad covered a 'wide spectrum including calling for peace, calling for justice and not just taking up arms'. He also noted 'we (PAS) are not saying that we are going to create a troop to do that. PAS is also not going to sponsor anyone'.

29 Tong Yee Siong, *Mahfuz wants Govt to provide military aid to Taliban* (Malaysiakini.com, October 11, 2001). In a press statement delivered at a press conference, the leader of the Youth Wing of PAS, Mahfuz Omar, declared that the Malaysian government should mobilize the member states of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) to fight against the United States, 'in any manner required'. Mahfuz also stated that the 'OIC should declare the US as a terrorist state and the number one enemy of Islam'. He then called on the Malaysian government to temporarily sever all diplomatic and economic ties with the United States, Malaysia's largest foreign investor and export market.

30 See Tong Yee Siong, *Church body believes arson attacks linked to extremists* (Malaysiakini.com, November 6, 2001). Between September and October, four churches were attacked by unknown arsonists in various states: Johor, Kedah, and Selangor. The Christian Federation of Malaysia, the umbrella body of local churches,

felt that there was a possible link between religious extremism and the arson attacks on the four churches. The CFM's principal secretary Wong Kim Kong stated that the CFM was not convinced that the attacks were carried out by an organized group. 'The acts of violence and sabotage were related to religious extremism but they were most probably done by members of the local community,' he said. To prevent the situation from deteriorating, the CFM later met with the Deputy Home Affairs Minister Chor Chee Heung to discuss measures to improve security at churches.

31 Tong Yee Siong, *Review 'positive' perception of PAS, Gerakan tells US* (Malaysiakini.com, October 14, 2001). The Vice-President of Gerakan said that previously the United States was sympathetic to PAS's cause of struggle in domestic politics. However, he then added that the United States should now 'know its friends' following the demonstration at its embassy on Friday. In a statement issued to the press, he stated: 'Please look at who burns the American flag now, and who has been moderate and supportive of the US, even to the extent of volunteering co-operation to assist in the apprehension of terrorists responsible for the Sept 11 calamity.'

32 Tong Yee Siong, *US thanks Mahathir for support, understands Malaysia's dilemma* (Malaysiakini.com, October 15, 2001). At a special press conference held in Kuala Lumpur, US Trade Representative Zoellick stated that the United States '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 US air strike on Afghanistan could jeopardize 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, 'I don't see any negative variety [of views] in there. The difference of views is understandable.'

33 *New Sunday Times*, '*Admiral Blair: Contain Terrorism For Political Stability*', November 25, 2001. Admiral Blair stated that the US Navy hoped to extend and expand its joint military operations with the Malaysian Navy in order to eradicate the threat of trans-border terrorism, gun running, smuggling, and piracy in the region. He announced that further joint US–Malaysian naval operations like Exercise Karat would be held in the future and that the US security forces would 'provide logistics, intelligence and advice to support the regional governments'.

34 The budget for 2002 introduced significant tax cuts and raised the pay of civil servants throughout the country as part of an overall domestic economic stimulus package. The RM111.5 billion (US$26.4 billion) budget was aimed at strengthening growth by boosting local demand. The budget cut maximum personal income tax by one percentage point to 28 percent, and gave the country's 850,000 civil servants a salary bonus on top of a 10 percent increase for the next year. Reinvestment by agricultural companies was granted 100 percent tax exemption against income for five years. During the unveiling of the budget, the prime minister said that Malaysia's current account surplus, subdued inflation, low foreign debt, and a pegged currency were all factors in assuring a recovery. Malaysia's trade surplus was expected to rise to RM55.4 bilion (US$14.6 billion) in 2002, from an estimated RM51.74 billion in 2001, with 6 percent export growth. The manufacturing sector was forecast to grow by 6.5 percent, thanks to a recovery in global electronics demand and increased consumer spending on cars and household goods. The services sector was expected to grow at 5.3 percent in 2002, up from 4.4 percent in 2001, but agriculture was expected to slow down to 0.8 percent from 1.2 percent. Inflation was forecast to remain below 2 percent and employment to rise by 4.25 percent to 9.8 million, from a population of about 22 million, representing almost full employment. On the whole the budget painted an upbeat picture for the future, forecasting an overall growth rate of 5 percent (after a sluggish growth of 1–2 percent for 2001, due to the effects of the American recession and the Afghan conflict). The size of the financial injection came third after China's and Japan's.

35 *Harakah*, November 16, 2001, *Amerika ketua pengganas antarabangsa – resolusi*, Oleh Nyza Ayob. Among those who took part in the conference were Dato' Kamaruddin Jaffar (Member of PAS Central Executive Committee), Dr. H Lukman Hakim Hasibuan (Vice-President of the Gerakan Pemuda Ka'bah Pusat, Indonesia), Faisal Malkatiri (Head of the Youth Wing of the Islamist Bulan Bintang Party of Indonesia), Fan Yew Teng (Malaysian peace activist), Mohamad Azmi Abdul Hamid (Coordinator of the Malaysian-based Third World Network), Nik Mohd Nasir Nik Abdullah (Representative of the Young Muslims Association of Thailand), Shahran Kassim (ABIM), and Syed Ibrahim Syed Abd Rahman (Member of PAS Central Executive Committee). Describing the attack on Afghanistan as part of a long-term conspiracy against Islam hatched by the United States and other anti-Muslim governments, the conference called on the OIC to play a more active role in the resolution of the Afghan crisis and for the OIC to openly condemn the actions of the United States and its allies, most notably Israel.

36 The one area where PAS's influence was still considerable was the local university campus. During the campus elections in the last week of November practically every campus student council fell into the hands of PAS-supporting student candidates. New regulations were introduced to control the activities of PAS supporters on campus (including a total ban on public speeches imposed in the National University, UKM), but to no avail. In many cases, PAS supporters won their seats uncontested. Of the thirteen main universities and institutions of higher learning in the country, the five most prestigious universitites – Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), University Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), and the International Islamic University (UIA) – were all clearly hotbeds of PAS supporters.

37 Saddam Hussein was born in the village of Al-Awja, east of the city of Takrit, in the north of Iraq. During his student days he was known as a radical and militant, and he was involved in the failed assassination attempt of the Iraqi President Abd Al-Karim Qasim. Saddam later joined the Ba'ath Party that was then made up and led by Iraqi nationalists, intellectuals, social scientists, and activists. The Ba'athists were attracted to the Nasserite concept of Pan-Arabism and wanted the Arab states to unite to become stronger. Within the party Saddam quickly rose to power and in 1968 – when the Ba'athists managed to topple the king – Saddam came to power as Vice-President behind his cousin Ahmad Hassan al-Bark who was then President of the Ba'ath Revolutionary Council. Through the use of force, guile, and intimidation, Saddam managed to build a power base for himself back in Takrit. He began to recruit party members and assistants from his own village of Al-Awja, who would rise with him later when he became president of the country. In 1979 Saddam's political ambition was fulfilled when he became president. He then centered all power and authority on himself, and redirected the ideology of the Ba'ath Party by discarding its socialist–egalitarian principles while promoting a conservative and exclusive ethno-nationalism and Pan-Arabism instead. This move was welcomed by Iraq's Western allies (most notably the United States), who wanted to ensure that Iraq would not fall into the Soviet bloc and prevent the rise of a leftist Arab movement in the Middle East. Throughout his period of rule he was an ardent modernizer and pro-development in his outlook. He forced through a nation-wide mass literacy campaign that made illiteracy a crime against the state, and despite the harshness of his modernization program he was supported by UNESCO as a model leader for the Arab world. A great admirer of Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin, Saddam preferred that his followers feared rather than loved him. When the Iran–Iraq war broke out in 1979, the modernizing and secular Saddam was promoted by the West as an exemplary Arab leader who would be able to hold back the tide of Islamic radicalism in the Arab world. Saddam ordered the use of chemical weapons and the killings of thousands of people during the Iran–Iraq war, though his pro-Western and anti-Iranian

stance made him the US's closest ally. In 1990 Saddam Hussein ordered his army to march southwards and invade Kuwait. This led to open conflict with the United States, which regarded Kuwait as a major strategic and economic ally. During the First Gulf War of 1991, Saddam escaped the numerous attempts to kill him when the US Air Force bombed Baghdad. Finally, in April 2003, Saddam Hussein's regime was toppled during the Second Gulf War when the United States and Britain – acting against the consensus of the international community – chose to unilaterally invade Iraq in order to 'liberate' the people from Saddam. The fact that Saddam Hussein was one of the US's longest-serving allies in the Arab world was conveniently forgotten by the American media that were then staunchly behind President George W. Bush. (See William Crane Eveland, *Ropes of Sand: America's Failure in the Middle East*,W. W. Norton, New York, 1980; William Blum, *Killing Hope: US Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*, Common Courage Press, Monroe, Maine, 1995; Mark Bowden, 'Milles et Une Histoires sur un Tyran', *Le Monde*, 19 March 2003, pp. 19–20.)

38 See The Changing of the Guard: A Survey of Malaysia, *The Economist*, April 5, 2003.

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12 Some 'Muslims' within

Watching television in Britain after September 11

Asu Aksoy

> Culture requires us to think, gives us forms – metaphors, dogmas, names, 'facts' – to think with, but does not tell us *what* to think: that is the self's work.
>
> (Cohen 1994: 154)

The essays in this book are concerned with media and public debate in Asia following the events of September 11 in the United States. What I want to concentrate on in my contribution, however, is how, if I may oversimplify for the moment, 'Asians' within the 'West' related to the coverage of the September 11 events. By the term 'Asian', I refer to 'minorities' with Asian or 'Muslim' backgrounds, and I will focus particularly on those living in Britain, and on the British context and circumstances of response to September 11. My analysis of this is based on empirical research that I undertook after the September 11 events with Turkish migrants living in Britain.[1] It takes as its main question how the critical events of September 11 were received and thought about within the context of multiple public debates that these people were connected with at the time.

This key question – whether 'ethnic' minorities (the 'Asians' within) were taking part in the general public debate, or whether they were being isolationist, cutting themselves off from the 'host' public sphere – has achieved enormous urgency after the September 11 events. 'What do our immigrant populations make of the attacks?' was the question being asked. Do they secretly celebrate them, or do they abhor them as we do? If they are watching channels like the Arabic language satellite news station, Al-Jazeera, which has no qualms about being different and presenting a challenging perspective on the events, then how could they be thinking along the same lines as us? And if they do not think like us, can we be sure of their allegiance to 'the values and norms that constitute the obligations that are central to being British?', as Hugo Young, a columnist in the liberal *Guardian* newspaper, put it (Young 2001).

What made the September 11 events so distinctive was precisely the extent to which the loyalty of immigrants in the West suddenly became a key issue. Writing from the Netherlands, Ed Klute, director of the broadcasting research institute, Stoa, reported that '[I]n the Netherlands all satellite dishes were sold out within several days of the World Trade Centre attacks. Islamic communities

have asked cable companies to relay Al Jazeera, like CNN, on the local cable networks' (Klute 2002). 'British Muslims must answer some uncomfortable questions' roared Hugo Young (2001) in his *Guardian* column. What September 11 threw up for Britain most profoundly, said Young, was the question of whether 'all citizens of migrant stock, particularly Muslims, actually want to be full members of the society in which they live?' (And, as if in answer to this, two months after the September 11 events, one of Britain's Asian newspapers, *Eastern Eye*, felt the need to declare that the 3 million British Asians were loyal to that country; the results of a survey amongst British Asians were regarded as 'a slap in the face to all those who have been muttering in the rightwing press that the loyalty of Britain's most dynamic community lies elsewhere – whether it be India or Islam' (Taher 2001).) Everywhere, it seemed, President Bush's rhetorical question, 'are you for us or against us?', was thrown at immigrant citizens, and particularly at those with Islamic backgrounds and beliefs.

And this was in the light of the sense that they might well feel that they were 'against us'. There was an awareness that many immigrants who had come from undeveloped and poor zones of the world to the 'West' might well have good grounds (both economic and cultural) for being resentful towards their countries of adoption. It was not so difficult, actually, to imagine immigrant groups as being anti-American in their responses to the events. One commentator in the *Guardian* newspaper did not hesitate to argue that Osama bin Laden's 'constituency is the immigrant and dispossessed, the internally displaced, second generation migrants, refugees and rural communities which have fled from war and famine to unhappy and overcrowded metropolitan areas' (Mackinlay 2001). With their almost unconscious anti-Americanism and their divided loyalties, it was inferred, migrants could not be trusted to share the same concerns and sensibilities as us, their 'host' nations. And in a context where migrant communities were perceived to be turning to transnational television stations for news and information, was there any basis for thinking positively in terms of their loyalty to us? More likely, if they were watching Al-Jazeera or channels from their 'homelands' (in foreign languages) they would be thinking differently.

In this chapter, I will be looking at one particular immigrant population in Britain, that of Turkish-speaking migrants,[2] and I will be focusing on the implications of their engagement with transnational Turkish media for the way they interpreted and reacted to the events surrounding September 11. Did Turkish migrant viewers, who were watching television from Turkey, think differently about the September 11 events? Were these Turkish migrant viewers exposed to a different kind of public debate, which then contributed to them being isolated from the discussions taking place in Britain at the time? And would members of the 'host' society – as represented by Hugo Young, for example – have grounds for feeling nervous, suspicious, vulnerable, or threatened? Was there a challenge to 'the values and norms that constitute the obligations that are central to being British'?

The 'problem' of transnational media in the light of the September 11 events

Until quite recently, a decade or so ago, migrant populations arriving in Britain only had access to English language television stations, the staple diet of the four national terrestrial channels and satellite-based channels like Sky (they had to program their video recorders for the (very) occasional movie aired in their own language, in the late night slots on the more specialist channels). As far as mass communications were concerned, then, immigrants were basically dependent on the media output of the host nation. And this restriction of access turned out to be a consoling reality for the 'host' society. In the 'majority' culture, there was always the hope and expectation that, through exposure to host-nation media, immigrants would find their way into the symbolic 'home' of the national community in which they had come to be based. This resonates with the sense, expressed by thinkers in the field of media studies, such as Paddy Scannell and (more critically) David Morley, that national broadcasting has played a pivotal role in bringing into being 'a culture in common' to whole populations and 'a shared life' (Scannell 1989: 138). Historically, national media systems have aimed at 'articulating the dispersed members of the nation to the centres of symbolic power'; and they have done this through 'the production of a shared sense of reality, which is materially inscribed in the dailiness of the newspaper or media broadcasts' (Morley 2000: 109, 105). Thus, it has been argued, for immigrants, if they want to be part of the imagined community that they have moved into, it is crucial that they come to participate in the shared public sphere of its national media culture. And, by the same token, from this perspective of the socializing function of broadcasting, anyone who is unable or unwilling to be part of the ordinary life of the daily diet of television would be seen to fall outside the 'shared life' of the nation.

This was the cultural logic of the era of national broadcasting systems. And it was a logic that came to be challenged from the early 1990s with the advent of new global and transnational television channels – channels such as Zee TV, Asianet or Sony Asia, MBC or Al-Jazeera, Phoenix or the Chinese Channel. These were all channels targeting linguistic/ethnic communities across national boundaries, making it possible for migrant communities to have access for the first time to 'alternative' mass media channels in their own languages. In the particular context of the case study community being considered in this chapter, it is now the case that, all across the European space, Turkish-speaking populations are now able to tune in to the numerous satellite channels broadcasting programmes from Ankara and Istanbul. It is possible for Turks in Europe to watch the official state station TRT-INT, as well as a plethora of commercial stations, such as Kanal D, Show TV, ATV, CNN Turk, NTV, Star. In addition, there is also the Kurdish language Medya TV, targeting Kurdish populations across Europe, Turkey, and the Middle East. These developments in transnational media have had very significant implications for how Turkish and Kurdish migrants experience their lives in Europe, and for how they think and feel about

their experiences (see Aksoy and Robins (2000) for a detailed account of this). We may say that the emergence of transnational broadcasting has put the sense of belonging to the national family of the 'host' culture into question. This has been the 'problem' created by the new transnational broadcasting systems.

In the period before the September 11 events occurred, however, the nature and extent of this 'problem' had not really become apparent. Responses to the transnationalization of broadcasting had been somewhat varied. At one end of the spectrum, there were actually those who viewed the availability of television 'from home' as a confidence-building mechanism for recent immigrants. According to this view, watching transnational television channels does not lead to disconnection or ghettoization of immigrants, but helps, rather, in the building up of their confidence with respect to who they are (Becker 2001). This line of thinking echoes a strand of multiculturalist thinking, which argues that, in the multi-ethnic societies of today, the way forward is through the recognition of the immigrants' 'right to difference'. The argument has been that cultural identities should be treated with equal dignity in the common public space, and that minority populations should be 'given a voice'. Within the British context, which is the particular focus of my concerns in this chapter, we should note that there has been relatively little attention being paid to the implications of immigrant communities watching their own television stations. I think we should take this as an indication of a predominantly multiculturalist outlook in the British approach to minority cultures (in Britain, it might be noted, in an area as sensitive as education, state-run single-faith schools from primary level onwards have been allowed for some time now). The prevailing attitude has been one of tolerance towards the different kinds of practices of immigrant and minority communities – with television consumption never seeming to be at all significant as one of these practices.

At the other end of the spectrum, however, the response to the new phenomenon of immigrants switching over to channels from home and away has been in terms of fears about the development of (minority) parallel societies and the undermining of integrationist policies and approaches. In the German context, for example, where Turkish immigrants occupy the central stage as the largest population of immigrants, we can find very critical statements focusing on the implications of transnational television for the imagined community of Germans. The most extreme version of this argument has been elaborated in the alarmist writings of Wilhelm Heitmeyer, in a discourse centred around anxieties concerning cultural ghettoization, the dangers of 'Islamic fundamentalism', and the marking out of new 'lines of ethno-cultural confrontation and conflict' (Heitmeyer *et al.* 1997). This kind of thinking has even been articulated among some members of the minority Turkish community in Germany. Thus Cem Özdemir, a Turkish-origin MP in the German Parliament, and well known for his integrationist approach, is quoted as saying

> I wish that the satellite dishes hadn't been invented. The number of Turkish families watching German television has decreased. In lots of families only

> Turkish channels are being watched. In these channels very little information is to be found about the German society. We know this for a fact that watching or listening to channels which are not German leads to the deterioration of the language of the foreigners living here. It is not enough to say 'don't watch Turkish television.' It is a natural right to be able to keep and use one's own language. But, by allowing this we are also transporting trouble to this country.
>
> (Quoted in Karakullukçu 1999)

In Özdemir's view, transnational Turkish channels negatively affect language acquisition; they create fissures in terms of immigrants' loyalty; and they import homeland politics into the host nation by linking migrants in an instantaneous fashion to the country they left behind. Transnational television in this outlook, then, is seen as a dangerous development with negative impact on the integration process.

The September 11 events put a whole new spin on thinking about the implications of transnational broadcasting. We may say that they massively reinforced the second of these two perspectives on the significance of transnational viewing, confirming already existing worries about the divisive effects of transnational channels. More and more voices started to lend support to the view that too much toleration of immigrant cultural practices was proving to be detrimental. The September 11 events served to crystallize fears and anxieties around issues of the integration of minorities. In Britain, for example, there was at the time already increasing alarm following the so-called race riots in the summer of 2001 in the northern cities of Bradford, Burnley, and Oldham, where mainly white and Asian youths had staged days of running street battles. Reports from the inquiry into these disturbances – they were published after the September 11 events – pointed the finger at the segregation of ethnic communities. 'Whilst the physical segregation of housing estates and inner-city areas came as no surprise,' said one of the reports, 'the team was particularly struck by the depth of polarisation of our towns and cities, and the extent to which these physical divisions were compounded by so many other aspects of our daily lives' (Cantle Report, quoted in Grice 2001). The issue, then, was to do with the extent to which ethnic communities segregated themselves culturally: on the basis of 'separate education, language, work, places of worship, and social and cultural networks' (Grice 2001). One could see how the attraction of transnational television stations among immigrant populations could be read as being 'problematical' in this light. In Britain, too, transnational media could be associated with the dynamics of cultural fragmentation and the erosion of the national 'culture in common'.

The overall conclusion of the committee producing the report was that 'many communities [now] operate on the basis of a series of parallel lives. They do not seem to touch at any point, let alone overlap and promote any meaningful interchange' (Grice 2001). In the post-September 11 environment of paranoia around Islamic extremists and around loyalty to the nation, what was earlier tolerated as unexceptional cultural practices of minorities was turned around as

an accusation of isolationism. 'Some Muslims,' said Britain's Europe Minister, Peter Hain, 'are cutting themselves off and feeding both rightwing politics and their own extremists' (*Guardian*, 13 May 2002). Whereas before September 11 the liberal persuasion could feel comfortable in allowing the so-called 'Muslim community' its difference, the aftermath of that critical event produced a complete reversal, with liberals coming to feel that their core beliefs were being undermined, and that the limits of multiculturalism had been reached.

In the light of the September 11 events, then, it is quite clear why there has been an increased concern about the uptake of transnational television. The availability of channels from elsewhere has been perceived as a fundamental challenge to the project of national unity, coherence, and integration – it does not seem to fit, that is to say, with the project of addressing immigrant differences within the terms – and boundaries – of the host-nation state. Transnational channels now increasingly seem to be opening up a new kind of cultural space that escapes the control of the host political community. They afford immigrant communities access to other media cultures, and consequently to alternative discourses, agendas, and perspectives. The fear, then, is that immigrants will use this new opportunity to reinforce their sense of belonging to their homelands, or to consolidate their belonging to their communities of belief and faith. This was the fear that was at large following the September 11 events.

The new world of 'us' and 'them'

What was crucial about the attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon on September 11 was that, on that and the following days, television viewers from all over the world were abruptly turned into global witnesses of a historic and momentous event. In the face of what the world's television screens were showing, there was a global collective sense of shock and awe.

In that brief period of time, all television stations from around the world were creating the same sense of a singular and seemingly inexplicable event taking place in the United States. In the first days of the coverage of the September 11 events, the world's media were united in just relaying the same horrifying pictures, with minimum commentary, as if to simply bring home the epic, the horrific, and the historic nature of what was taking place in front of our shocked eyes. September 11 was a critical event, in the sense intended by Das (1995); it was the kind of event through which people's lives might be propelled in new directions, and new kinds of feeling and thinking jolted into being. It was a critical event, also, in the sense that there were no ready-made answers to what had unfolded. The available frames of reference seemed inadequate for explaining the meaning of it all. Clearly, there was a need to engage in an arduous thinking process before any understanding of the events could take place.

But what came into play, instead of thinking and understanding, was an entirely unthinking mode of response. It was a reaction born out of anxiety and fear of the unknown. Very quickly, the events began to be framed within the predictable defensive rhetoric of 'us' against 'them', where 'us' stood for 'civiliza-

tion', and 'them' for everything that was 'primitive' and 'uncivilized'. The events began to be made sense of in terms of the now familiar polarization between the West, synonymous with 'freedom and democracy', and its 'Other', associated with every possible form of 'evil'. And when it came to be known that the enemy was Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, then, of course, it was easy to mobilize the familiar tropes that opposed the West to the world of Islam. At this particular historical moment, of course, the 'clash of civilizations' mentality was 'in the (Western) air' – these events could seem to be a vindication of Samuel Huntington's epic prognostications.

Everything began to seem to make sense now that it could be 'explained' in terms of the imagined affinity between Islam and violence. And so, instead of reflecting and trying to understand the meaning of what appeared meaningless, public opinion in the United States and Europe became engulfed in a cloud of unknowing. Or, we might say, 'the West versus Islam' became the rigid template for ignorant thinking. This was clearly the template that was drawn upon in much of the British media. Here, in the tabloid press, you could see such headlines as 'Praise to Allah – dancing with joy the warrior race of fanatics born to detest the West', 'This fanaticism that we in the West can never understand', 'In the heart of London demands for a Holy War' (quoted in Allen 2001). Popular newspapers could only think in terms of such polarization (which means, of course, not really thinking at all). On British television, what we saw were repeated images of the heavily bearded Osama bin Laden, the heart of the heart of the 'axis of evil'. And when we saw images of Palestinian children apparently cheering at the carnage in New York and Washington, this could only reinforce the sense of a contest with absolute evil (Sajoo 2001). And, as the coverage progressed, the locus of evil was no longer in Afghanistan or Palestine, but seemed to be closer and closer to 'home'. Writing on the rise of Islamophobia in the British media, Allen (2001) remarks on the way in which the British media juxtaposed

> images of Muslim men burning American flags whilst brandishing rifles […] with angry young men shouting outside a north London mosque. Afghan women covered from head to toe in the *burqha* followed by women wearing the *hijab* protesting against military action outside the Pakistan embassy in London.

Now there was no longer any distance between us and them. Fear, anxiety, and resentment were beginning to be provoked by the 'Muslims within'.

So, this was how 'we' were thinking about 'them'. But what also have to be taken into account are the ways in which coverage of September 11 also encouraged us to think about 'us'. Who were 'we', and what did we stand for? This means taking note of the emotions that we invested in our sense of 'we' – which may be regarded as an issue concerning the nature of the West's narcissistic investments. And we should also reflect on how 'we' came to be configured – or reconfigured – in opposition to the enemy. The United States of course, but

clearly 'we' was more than just that. Who or what, then, after September 11 could count – count themselves, that is to say – as part of that peculiar Western category of 'us'?

At the most fundamental level, 'us' stood for the American society. And it was emotionally linked to the idea of the United Sates as 'blameless victim', and to the powerful sense of wounded pride among the American people. This was the greatest American tragedy since Pearl Harbor, and, like that earlier disaster, there was a sense of both humiliation and indignation that such an event could happen on 'sacred' American soil. The discursive order that emerged out of this chaos was built around patriotic ideals and fervour. Americans were quickly learning again what it really means to be an American. Even a leftist and critical thinker like Todd Gitlin seems to have experienced the resurgence of American pride and national reassertiveness. 'The American people were stirred by patriotism after the eleventh, and I with them,' he declared. 'They inverted the wound of the WTC into protestation, pride, and the flag as a badge of belonging' (Gitlin 2002). This was a time for bonding and belonging – and for asserting the superior and exclusive nature of the American bond. The flag spoke for the United States – it became a ritualistic focus for restoring a sense of American community. What was being mobilized was reinvigorated national patriotism enhanced with religious sensibility. Janet Abu-Lughod has described very well how national religiosity became a key reference point in the endeavour of restoring the American social fabric in the aftermath of the attacks: 'Ground Zero' was also called 'sacred ground', spontaneous and televised ceremonies took on a religious tone, icons and 'totemic' symbols (flags, lapel pins) became ubiquitous, hymns were sung. 'This is sufficient,' she concludes, 'to suggest the religious character of the response – a response intended to galvanise the society for unity' (Abu-Lughod 2001).

But it was not just a question of the symbolic and ceremonial tropes that helped to make sense of the events for the imagined community of Americans. It was also crucial to buy the rest of the world – the rest of the world that could be included in the category of 'us', that is to say – into the crusade against 'evil'. The United States needed to build the other key Western nations into its symbolic agenda. Abu-Lughod draws our attention to the discursive strategies that were crucial and necessary for gaining broader support for the American cause. What was emphasized in this rhetorical development was that it was not just Americans who were killed in the attack on the World Trade Center, but citizens from across the world. The catastrophe of September 11 was referred to as 'a crime against humanity' – all people of the 'civilized' world were its victims. And all these 'good' people were consequently encouraged to join the crusade of retribution (the so-called Operation Enduring Freedom) against the forces of evil. As Abu-Lughod (2001) puts it, the punishment was to be executed by ' "our kinds of people" – in the manichean spirit of "you are either with us or against us" '. And so, in the name of civilizational values, the citizens of the 'free world' were invited to become virtual Americans. Shawcross (2001) took up and propagated this rhetorical trope in the pages of the *Guardian* newspaper. 'The attack on

America is an attack on us all,' he declared. 'We are all in this together. We are all Americans now.' 'America remains,' he continued, 'as it has always been, a beacon of hope for the world's poor and dispossessed and for all those who believe in freedom of thought and deed.'

And so the strategy of global containment after the events of September 11 mobilized the symbolic language of American patriotism and 'American values', driven (ironically, for the sceptical among us) by religious fervour and the rhetoric of crusade. The discourse of 'good versus evil' was unleashed on the world, instituting an absolute imaginative polarization between those who are 'for us' and those who are 'against us'. And those who belonged to this latter camp were imagined, moreover, as absolutely and eternally against – against reason and enlightenment. 'The enmity runs too deep' warned a writer in the *New York Times Magazine*, commenting on Al-Jazeera television: 'The truth is that a foreign power can't easily win a "war of ideas" in the Muslim world' (Ajami 2002). This is the rhetoric and mythology of civilizational clash. On the basis of this rhetoric and mythology, it became possible to institute a regime of US-style jihad, in which 'deviants or persons who might be LIKE the perpetrators of the crime are also to be punished. … Arabs, Sikhs, and others with swarthy complexions' (Abu-Lughod 2001). Hence, the unrelenting Western aggression since September 11, from the bombing of Afghanistan, to the widespread persecution of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers who are not of 'our kind'. And to the point, surely, that the 'beacon of hope' mythology would become extinguished.

It is in this context that I turn to consider the position of those who have found themselves positioned as the enemies within – ethnic minorities, especially the Islamic ones, living in the West. These are people who now find themselves classified as fundamentalists, or potential fundamentalists; and criticized for behaving, or thinking, or even just looking fundamentalist. In one focus group discussion that I conducted, one of the participants remarked with dismay on how his neighbours, who had previously said hello to him every morning, had now stopped doing so. 'Everybody started calling us bin Laden,' he said.

> You started to feel guilty. Your neighbour says, 'Well he's a Muslim, too, he's from Turkey.' You start feeling guilty, as if you've done something wrong. It's because they blamed it on us, because it was the Muslims who had done it.
>
> (Focus group, London, 1 March 2002)

What he is sensitive to is a certain paranoia – a normalized paranoia – about those who come from an 'alien culture', who keep themselves to themselves, and who watch television coming from the 'other' side. In the new world order of 'us' and 'them', migrants living in Western countries – like the Turks and Kurds in Britain – found themselves in a particularly difficult and invidious position.

Turkish migrants, transnational television, and September 11

Migrants were figured as an anomalous category – they might live in the Western heartland, but they were not 'of it'. They were *de facto* positioned as being anti-American, even when they might have no strong identification with the world of Islam. It became dangerous for them to pose the necessary questions about the September events: Why did this attack target the United States? Why would these terrorist–believers have killed so many innocent and defenceless people (including themselves)? How could one think beyond revenge and retribution? And how could one think through the question of fundamentalisms and fundamentalists? If they seemed to voice any criticism of US foreign policy, migrants/minorities were immediately condemned as disloyal, and potentially treacherous – not 'with us', and therefore 'against us'. Being 'with us' had to mean wholesale acceptance of the 'American' truth. Complex or balanced or ambivalent thinking was simply off the agenda. There was no apparent way between the Manichean positions of 'us' and 'them' – you had to have one identity, one loyalty, or the other.

What I want to do now is to explore the responses of Turkish-speaking people in Britain (London) to the events of September 11, considering particularly their experiences of finding themselves 'between camps', and their attempts to negotiate their situation of what we might call double displacement and estrangement. The focus will be upon their relation to the media in the period after September 11, and on their reflections on watching this particular media event. How did the Turkish migrants relate to the media coverage of the September 11 attacks, then? Did watching Turkish news make any difference in terms of how the Turkish migrants made sense of and interpreted the events? What did they think of the attacks? There is a view that says that Turks watched Turkish television as an expression – a reflex – of their 'belonging' to that culture. This seems to be the view put forward by Ed Klute, for example, when he seeks to explain the attraction of transnational channels during the post-September 11 period. 'Islamic audiences as well as other ethnic minority groups turned to satellite stations like Al-Jazeera based in Qatar, Turkish satellites and the Internet,' says Klute, because 'these media offer them news and information based on cultural values with which they are able to identify' (Klute 2002). I want to suggest, in contrast to this view, that what was going on was far more complex than this. This means moving beyond the reductionist association of television consumption with the assertion of identity. In my account, migrants used the media, not in terms of identity gestures, but – like other categories of (non-migrant) television viewers – to think about the events of September 11. I maintain that they watched Turkish television in a thinking mode, moving between different language channels, and with an awareness that there was, in fact, no news source, and no 'cultural values', that they could straightforwardly 'identify with'. In the eyes of their 'host' country, their position seemed clear – they were the Muslims within – but their own self-image was, actually, a great deal more complex and contradictory.

What is apparent from the research I have undertaken is the peculiarity of the Turkish position with respect to the September 11 events – a peculiarity of perspective that comes from the complicated and distinctive relationship of Turkey with respect to both the Western world and the Islamic world. The point is that, through a long and complex historical process, Turks have become in one sense a part of both of these worlds, and yet at the same time outsiders of both. What is significant is their complex inside–outside stance with respect to both possibilities of 'belonging'. I would say that the Turkish perspective is characterized by a significant – and interesting – sense of cultural dislocation, involving considerable cultural ambivalence towards both the Western and the Muslim cultural orders. And, in the context of the September 11 developments, it was this cultural ambivalence that came into play. Positioned alongside the other 'Muslims within', the Turks felt at some distance from the wider Islamic protests (many Turks have a strong secular identity; and religious Turks differentiate themselves from Middle Eastern (Arab) Islamic culture). Coming from a secular, EU-orientated, NATO-member country, Turks may feel that they have Western credentials, but there is a distrust of the West (and many Turks in Britain come from leftist, internationalist, Third World – and consequently anti-American – backgrounds). The Turkish experience was one of double alienation, we might say. The taking of sides was never, therefore, a straightforward possibility for the Turkish migrants I spoke to in London.

Let me now try to put across something of the nature of the Turkish responses to my questions concerning television spectatorship and intellectual–imaginative response to the events of and following September 11. I can do this under three headings, each drawing out something of the ambivalence of attitude and thought in the people that I interviewed, and showing how, as a consequence of this predicament, Turkish migrants were forced into a position of independent reflection. My aim here will be to consider how much 'identity' or 'belonging' informed Turkish people's thinking about the September 11 events, and also the extent to which their position of structural ambivalence (with respect to both Western and Islamic cultures) could be used to complicate and reframe the processes of responding to and thinking about those events. We may say that there was a certain kind of tension between 'belonging' and thinking, in both cultural and political senses – often ending up in impasse and dogmatic closure, but from time to time leading to productive insights and questions.

Identity and ambivalence

In order to understand the responses of Turkish migrants to the events of September 11, we have to take account of their particular and distinctive position in British society, and of their wider sense of cultural location. I have referred to it in terms of a double displacement. Turks come from an Islamic country, but very many of them do not feel that being a Muslim is central to their self-image (and those who are religious generally distinguish their religious

culture from that of the Middle East). They have strongly identified with Western values, but are generally not acknowledged as being Western, and often themselves have a certain anti-imperialist animosity towards the West. We might characterize their position as one of double dislocation. The Turks that I spoke with live in Britain, often having British passports, but they do not strongly identify with it and with its culture and values. They live away from Turkey, and can be very critical indeed of the country they left behind – Sunni Muslims, Alevis, Kurds, Turkish Cypriots, and leftists, most have problems with what Turkey stands for. What is apparent is detachment and critical distance with respect to both potential poles of identification. What is particular to very many of the Turks living in London is a perspective of cultural ambivalence.

This condition of ambivalence did not seem to cause anyone to suffer unduly. I would say that Turkish migrants were generally able to accommodate the different elements in their cultural experience. And in the context of Britain, where their 'minority' presence was relatively invisible, Turks did not feel the need to become engaged in identity politics – unlike South Asian and Afro-Caribbean migrants, say, particularly, whose presence was more numerous and symbolic. For many Turks, then, the complexities of identity were not a live and pressing issue. We might even say that they could appreciate the virtues of ambivalence. But the events of September 11 changed all that. Suddenly, in the context of the rekindled discourse of Islam and the West, the identity of Turkish migrants could no longer be left as a sleeping dog. The 'problem' was that they came from an Islamic country. They were compelled to reflect on their complicated relation to Muslim identity. And also to confront the complex nature of their engagement with Western culture. Turks found themselves in a particularly position in the imaginary polarization between 'us' and 'them'. Which world did they belong to? Where was their real allegiance? Their cultural ambivalence might now be interpreted in some quarters in terms of contradiction.

Following September 11, Turks found themselves aggregated into the categorical domain of 'Islam'. Their religious identity was pushed to the fore, and they were consequently incorporated into the alien world of 'them'. This was a development that produced quite conflictual feelings. On the one hand, there was resentment: many Turks know very little about Islamic religion and culture, they do not regard Islam as central to their sense of self, and they certainly do not have any interest in jihad politics. They emphasize their secular identity, and have endeavoured to distance themselves from Muslim concerns and values. But, on the other hand, Turks also found themselves paradoxically identifying with the Muslim position in the post-September 11 period. They could identify with Muslims as underdogs (as the enemies of the United States), and they identified with them on political grounds when Muslim minorities in Britain began to be subjected to racist vilification and attacks. Thus, in a discussion with a family with a strong left-wing, Alevi background, the father expressed the extreme discomfort of his response when he found out that the attacks on New York and Washington had been carried out by Muslim extremists. 'I was very concerned about this,' he declared.

> There are thousands of Muslims living in European countries. OK, I don't dress like them. Unless they interfere with me, I don't interfere with them. But I thought that racist attacks on them might increase. I too come from a Muslim country. I can't go out in the street and scream that I'm an atheist. Me, my children, my family, could easily become a target for such racist attacks.
>
> (Focus group, London, 5 February 2002)

More significant than his distance from Muslim politics, at this moment, is his concern about the threat that Muslims in Britain were experiencing – and his awareness that, in the perception of many British people, he and his family were counted in the same category.

Many of the men in another group explained how they had suffered as a result of increasing xenophobic and anti-Muslim sentiments in Britain. We were discussing what people felt when they heard about the September 11 attacks. What was the nature of their reactions? 'I felt panic,' said one of the participants.

> Because I live in England, among the English, I said to myself, that's it. Because Muslims are being blamed, I said to myself 'This is the end of us … .' My first reaction, at that moment, was to be very glad, but afterwards, because this event was linked to Islam, everybody was afraid. I said to myself, there are only a few Muslims here [he lives in a town outside London], and they're going to finish us off.
>
> (Focus group, London, 1 March 2002)

Turks in London got to know what it is like to be classified and vilified as Muslims, then. But, at the same time, they also came to be aware of, and to share, the anxious and fearful feelings that British people were experiencing. This point was brought home when we moved on to discuss the different experiences and perceptions of Turks in Turkey and Turks in London. 'The relationship between Britain and the United States is very strong,' remarked one of the participants.

> Because you are here [in London], you are in danger. And that's why people here are so fearful and so confused. But people in Turkey, they don't imagine they will be attacked – Turkey is a Muslim country. For someone living in London, it's different. My aunt [who lives in London] kept worrying that London would be bombed.
>
> (Focus group, London, 1 March 2002)

Many of the women participants in focus groups reported feelings of anxiety and fear that there might be attacks on London. They talked about the stories and scenarios that their children were bringing back from school, and of the widespread fear that certain buildings in London, such as Canary Wharf, could

become targets for further terrorist strikes. 'If there is a second target, I thought, it will be England,' said one woman (focus group conducted by Aydin Mehmet Ali, 2002, London). There was the perception among Turkish migrants, then, of threats coming from two different directions, the sense of being in double jeopardy.

As I have already indicated, most of the Turkish migrants that I spoke with were of a secular orientation. Their beliefs and values were very much in line with the modern Turkish commitment to Western 'civilization' and 'modernity'. They have been successfully socialized into the ideology of 'West is best', and are anxious to distinguish themselves, as progressives, from the 'regressive' mentality of religious people, and particularly from Taliban-style 'fundamentalism'. Like Western viewers, they too regarded al-Qaeda and the Taliban as radically 'other'. In this particular context, they were generally inclined to identify with the cause of the Western 'us'. 'It's good that the U.S. intervened in Afghanistan, and that the backward regime there collapsed,' remarked one informant. 'I see this as a positive thing, that America has been getting rid of the monster it created,' another added (focus group, London, 1 March 2002). They were opposed to what Osama bin Laden stood for. But, at the same time, they were also inclined to express suspicions about what the United States stood for. There was a profound distrust of the United States. In one group, composed of Turkish Cypriots, one young participant said that she was 'glad that the women of Afghanistan would be liberated' (focus group conducted by Aydin Mehmet Ali, London, March 2002). But, at the same time, she was also expressing severe misgivings about the rationale for American intervention, thinking that the attacks on New York and Washington 'could be part of America's own game plan, to open the way to attack Afghanistan. … America was looking for a pretext.' Another woman in the group gave support to this suspicious speculation. 'Those who set up the Kennedy scenarios could have set this one up easily,' she remarked. 'America has a tradition of intervening in other countries. They divided the world into two: those who like America, and those who don't. For those countries they decide to intervene in, they look for a reason to do so.' If there was a sense of distance, then, from the Islamic cause, this combined with a deep unease and scepticism about the motivations of the United States.

In all the focus group discussions that I conducted, this kind of anti-American sentiment was constantly present. Participants expressed their genuine sorrow for the innocent victims of the attacks; and many had their own experiences and stories of suffering in Turkey, and could therefore go some way, at least, towards understanding what ordinary people in New York must have gone through. But they expressed bitter contempt for the seats of power in the United States, for the Pentagon and the White House. Anti-American sentiments cohered around an image of the American state as a powerful, arrogant, and destructive force. There was a great deal of discussion among group participants about the conflict and devastation that the United States has wrought upon the world – references were made to Hiroshima, Palestine, Vietnam, and Chile, as well as to Kurdistan, and Turkey. People complained about how, despite the massive loss of

lives in these places as a direct result of American intervention, these massacres had all been conveniently forgotten. The invasion of Afghanistan was seen as simply the next incident in a serial history of US military assertion and expansion. As the young daughter in a family I interviewed put it:

> It was clear [following September 11] that America had a definite response. It was clear that it would go to war. It was like that in Vietnam, too. People opposed it so much. What America want is clear and obvious, it wants to be the most powerful country in the world.
>
> (Focus group, London, 13 February 2002)

Many of the Turks living in London are from leftist backgrounds, with a strong anti-imperialist and Third World orientation, and they had consequently harboured animosities towards the American state. Over time, and in the context of living as migrants in Britain, these hostile feelings had become dormant – part of their formation, but no longer functioning in an active mode. What the events on and after September 11 did was to stir up memories, resentments, and political reflexes concerning the United States. For the first time in many years, Turkish migrants (including their children) were reminded of how the United States had figured in their lives, and were impelled to think about its significance again (this is a point that I shall pick up on again a little later in my argument).

What I want to emphasize at this point is the extent to which the cultural reference points of Turkish migrants were disturbed by the events from September 11 to the invasion of Afghanistan. Until this time, it seems that the complexities of the migrants' internal cultural geographies were not problematical. They came from an Islamic country, but they had clearly distanced themselves from religious points of reference. They had been aligned with the left and the cause of anti-imperialism, but that was in the past, and they had subsequently adapted to life in the First World. What occurred in the aftermath of September 11 was that the by now peaceful coexistence of the different parts of their biographies and beliefs was disturbed. Their relationship to Islam was suddenly rendered more complex. And their complicated feelings about the hegemony of the West, and particularly the American superpower, were once again being reactivated. We may say that the events of September 11 confronted Turkish migrants with new experiences of ambivalence in identity and identification.

Media and scepticism

The next observation to be made is that, whilst Turkish migrants do indeed like to watch Turkish television, and did so with particular engagement during the period following September 11, this should not be interpreted in terms of them being or becoming a captive audience of their 'homeland' media. Watching television from Turkey is not at all about being subsumed within an exclusive Turkish cultural world (as in the scenario envisaged by Heitmeyer and others)

(see Robins and Aksoy 2001). The Turkish cultural domain should not be conceived or imagined as some kind of 'imprisoning cocoon', to use Baumann's (1996: 1) turn of phrase. Watching September 11 on Turkish television by no means entailed confidence or trust in Turkish broadcasting sources, or the suspension of critical reflection and thought. And it did not in any way preclude access to other cultural and informational spaces. On the contrary, I would say that frustrations about the nature and quality of Turkish news actually encouraged viewers to turn to alternative sources of information – and when they turned to these other sources, then it was with an equally sceptical and critical stance.

In many of the group discussions that I undertook in London, participants would talk about how they routinely ranged across both Turkish and British channels, as they tried to find out more about the September 11 events. In one particular discussion, involving a group of Kurdish men, participants compared notes on the coverage of the catastrophe by both Turkish and British channels. The objection lodged against Turkish channels was that they did not provide sufficient analysis of what was happening. 'On the whole, they showed pictures of the atrocities,' complained one of the participants, 'but they didn't do very much in the way of interpretation' (focus group, London, 1 March 2002). ''They [the Turkish media] were hypocritical and opportunistic,' another member of the group objected, 'they didn't report objectively.' He noted the way in which the Turkish state and media had sought to co-opt the terrorism issue for their own ends, 'creat[ing] the impression, look we were right, we too have been suffering from terrorism, this is what terrorism is like'. A third participant in this group brought up the question of British coverage of the September 11 attack, observing that, in his view, it had been overly emotive, especially at the beginning, when 'they were talking about the last phone calls from the planes, and as you listened your eyes filled with tears'. A further critical observation on the British media related to how the British (and American) channels were drawing on the imagery of the crusades. As one of the participants put it, 'British television started putting the blame on Muslims, interpreting the events as a war between Muslims and Christians. There was no logic in this, only an aggressive attitude, a sensationalist attitude.' The participants in this group ranged across channels, then, and they did so with no illusions about the authority or objectivity of broadcast news (Turkish or British), and no criticism spared.

The Turkish migrant viewers that I interviewed were extremely sceptical about the quality and reliability of Turkish media, then. But clearly they were not, as a consequence, inclined to be sympathetic towards British media as a more reliable source of information. Scepticism in one direction provoked scepticism in the other. In one group discussion, one of the participants remarked, with some bitterness, that even if you had started out with some sense of loyalty to, or trust in, a particular channel, after September 11 this trust was sorely tested. He pointed out how British television had suggested that the terrorists were Afghans, when in fact they were Saudis. 'This was such propaganda,' he objected, 'and yet nobody reflected on that. And that's a big contradiction' (focus

group conducted by Aydin Mehmet Ali, London, 7 March 2002). 'I kept my eyes and ears open,' he went on, 'but nothing critical got through, you didn't hear any different voices. I wasn't able to get much of a critical perspective.' In another discussion, a young Turkish (Alevi) man said that he found British channels subservient to the government's pro-American policies: 'They don't want to wake people up. I think the Americans knew [about the attack beforehand]. They're misleading people' (focus group, London, 13 February 2002). What was apparent, then, in all the focus groups I conducted was a generalized scepticism (in the case of the Kurdish group referred to above, even when they occasionally made comments on coverage by the Kurdish channel, Medya TV, they were unimpressed – Medya TV's news was second-hand, taken from the BBC or CNN – or it simply relayed official positions, declarations, and rhetoric).

What I would argue, then, is that the response of Turkish migrants to September 11 was not a consequence of watching Turkish television, and of what they were being told by the Turkish media. More significant for understanding their responses were, I think, their capacity and their readiness to range across channels in search of information about September 11. As one informant expressed, with particular clarity:

> When there's a news item about a world event, we always look at British television as well. We compare them both [British and Turkish]. If our satellite dish was working, we would have done the same. We would have watched the news on both, to see who says what; a bit of curiosity, a desire to catch a bit more detail about something. We think that they all report in a biased way. Maybe we're mistaken, maybe what they're reporting is correct, but we're not satisfied. … That's why we change channels, move across different channels, to have more knowledge, to be reassured, to be better informed… As long as I'm not satisfied, I look at other channels, to see what this one is saying, what that one is saying. … It's a kind of a small-scale research on our part.
>
> (Focus group, London, 5 February 2002)

The thinking of Turkish migrants was in fact shaped much more by this 'small-scale research' on their part, by the continual comparisons they were making between channels and programmes, and by the critical distance that this consequently gave them from the ideologies and biases of both Turkish and British broadcasting cultures. I would also argue that this condition of cultural mobility gave rise to a generalized scepticism about the coverage of September 11. It was a scepticism that was in line with the general ambivalence that Turks felt about the events that had polarized Western and Islamic worlds – a scepticism that in fact accommodated their reluctance to align themselves with one or other of these opposed camps.

Thinking and its vicissitudes

So far, I have considered how the post-September 11 events occasioned a sense of ambivalence among Turkish migrants in Britain, with respect to both Turkish/Islamic and Western connections. These Turks felt themselves at the same time within and without both the 'us' and the 'them' cultural spaces. And I have then gone on to consider the significance of media consumption for their thinking about September 11, suggesting that their mobility across both Turkish and British media sustained a generally reflexive, and consequently ambivalent and sceptical, stance towards the events. What I now want to argue is, first, that it was this in-between position that they found themselves in that forced Turkish migrants to think; and, second, that it also informed the logic of their thinking processes. This is to go against the idea that Turks responded as they did as a consequence of their Turkish identity, or on the basis of what Turkish television was telling them (against the idea that, in the weeks following September 11, they became drawn into the Turkish public sphere). My point is that, with no sense of a singular authoritative resource to draw on – as a consequence from their sense of distance from all sources of informational authority – Turks had to do a lot of thinking for themselves. As well as thinking about the immediate circumstances of September 11, there were suddenly issues to be thought about concerning their own perspective. They were compelled to think in order to try to address the implications and consequences of their own ambivalent positioning.

The key issue must then concern the nature of the thinking process. Following Cohen (1994), I want to draw attention to the way in which people mobilize all kinds of more or less productive forms to think with. What came out in my focus groups was how people might draw on aspects of their own backgrounds and lived experiences to make sense of what they were seeing. As leftists or as Kurds, for example, they have been confronted with massacres before, and they know what it is like to be persecuted. But at the same time, as Cohen notes, people may also use dogmas, names, or 'facts' to think with – which may mean not thinking very well at all. What was apparent in my discussions was the ease with which 'known' truths and realities could be invoked. I was interested in the tropes and rhetoric of these Turkish migrants, and in the degree to which the available dogmas and explanatory frames of reference might be put under challenge by the new context of cultural complexity and ambivalence.

The first thing to note here is the extent to which thinking in the focus group sessions centred on what might be called the American question – and, with this, we are back to the issue of anti-Americanism. I was struck by the incessant questions being posed about the US role in the chain of September 11 events. Was it really conceivable that Osama bin Laden could have undertaken such a massive strike alone? How was it possible for the United States not to have known about the attacks in advance? Might the CIA have had some hand in these events? Maybe the US economy was in need of an attack of this kind? What was the connection between bin Laden and the United States? How many people actu-

ally died? Didn't they say that the number of people working in the World Trade Center was between 25,000 and 50,000? Was it really possible to empty those huge buildings so quickly? Did the US government conceal the real figures? Why was the United States declaring war on Afghanistan? What was the nature of US interests in the Afghan region? Was the real agenda to do with the natural resources? And so on. Of course, these were not questions being posed only by these Turkish migrants, but they were questions that were posed with particular scepticism, incredulity, and indignation by them.

What was significant, then, was how the attention of discussants became so focused on the United States, and, to be even more precise, on US foreign policy. Participants in the groups were highly critical of the US government's interventionist policies in the Middle East, as well as in other parts of the world. They were concerned about the relation between US foreign policy and the predatory interests of American companies operating in the global economy. And they were particularly attentive to the strategic and military manoeuvring of the US government in regions with significant oil, petroleum, and natural gas resources. (And they deplored the apparent insensitivity of the American people with respect to what their own government was doing across the world in their name.) What was clear was that the United States was not regarded as an innocent party, but as being highly implicated in the events that had unfolded – even as implicated in some way in the attacks of September 11. In the minds of these Turkish migrants, it was as if the United States was on trial, and they were taking the stance and perspective of the prosecution. The United States was in the dock, and it had better be ready to defend itself against a world that was now ready to impeach it.

The United States was on trial, and the general assumption among those that I spoke with was that it was guilty; the onus was on the United States to demonstrate its innocence. There were two different logics at work in the prosecution and condemnation of the United States. The first was an argument out of historical precedent – and, at the same time, out of the political biographies and experience of these accusers. Thus, as I have already suggested, the invasion of Afghanistan seemed to make sense in the context of the past history of US military intervention and aggression. There was indeed a kind of plausibility in this kind of explanation of what was going on, particularly from those who had a Third World political formation. It did not seem fanciful to link September 11 to Vietnam and to Palestine, and even to make a connection back to Hiroshima (perhaps by way of Pearl Harbor). The second kind of logic was more questionable. This was grounded in a certain perverse interpretation of the American state's motivations; in an imagination of the United States as a perverse force in world politics. According to this line of reasoning, it was the United States itself that was behind the September 11 attacks. There was speculation about how it might actually have used al-Qaeda to deliver the attacks, and then debate as to why it would have undertaken such a perverse operation. One Kurdish informant told me that when he learned about the defence technologies in operation around the Pentagon, his conclusion was that only the United States could have

launched the attack. 'I think that this is an internal U.S. matter,' he said, 'an act by the deep state, that America hit itself.' Another man in the same group concurred: 'I think it was the CIA, the CIA's own men, not bin Laden. Anyway, bin Laden was working for the CIA' (focus group, London, 1 March 2002). The underlying suspicion was that the United States had initiated the attacks on September 11 in order to create a pretext for its subsequent invasion of Afghanistan. On quite a few occasions the name of Mossad was thrown into the equation, to suggest that there was an Israeli connection to the September 11 events. 'The day when the attacks happened, was it twelve hundred or so Jews, that didn't go to work that day?' asked one man (focus group, London, 1 March 2002). At this point, thinking seems to have got caught up in the imaginative dimension of conspiracy theory and urban myth. Of course, this kind of rhetoric was again not specific to these Turkish people, but we may say that such tropes did resonate more fully with their own painful experiences, and their accumulated dogmas, too.

What we have to consider here, I think, are the real difficulties in thinking through the issues of September 11. There are, of course, the manifest difficulties caused by lack of information and knowledge about what happened on September 11, or about the activities of Western forces in Afghanistan. The secrecy and censorship that characterized the post-September 11 period made it very difficult for anyone to come up with a reasoned and substantiated response, whatever media sources they might have access to (see, for example, Hackett, 2001–2). But, in the context of the present argument, I want to consider another difficulty that Turkish migrants experienced when they tried to think about the events of September 11, one that derived from the complex nature of their relation to those events. The problem is that their thinking, which is shaped by both experiences of persecution and dogmas about persecution, can easily become frozen – resorting to a rigid template that subordinates all realities to a defensive scheme. When this happens, the potentially creative possibilities that might emerge from their position of cultural ambivalence are closed down. In their place, we may find the rhetoric of dogmatic (pseudo-)resolution. The issue, then, is whether and how it might be possible to move beyond this kind of intellectual and imaginative foreclosure. Earlier, I characterized this issue in terms of the struggle between thinking and identity/belonging. Here I will consider it in terms of the struggle between complex thinking and dogmatic thinking.

I want to refer to a discussion that occurred in one of my focus group discussions, among young Kurdish migrants. And I want to make a contrast between the perspectives of some of the participants. What I will suggest is that, in the interchange between these people, it is possible to discern something of the struggle between different thought styles, between contrasting modalities of thinking. Early in the discussion, one of the young women in the group, I will call her Ayşe, talked about her shock at the way her parents had responded to the events of September 11 – her shock at the extent of their hostility towards the United States:

> Personally, [she says] I don't have anti-American feelings. But when I came home that day, when I looked at my parents – and there were lots of neighbours in our house. … My parents were saying 'it's not right that people should die [in the World Trade Center], but something like this was necessary for them [the United States], they needed to experience this pain …'. But this was very different from what I felt. How could you think anything like this? My mother's reaction was … she said, 'thousands of Kurdish people have died in the Middle East, and this was as a result of America's politics, or British politics'. OK, there are these politics, people are being massacred. But quite honestly it seemed very wrong to me to be glad about the people massacred in the United States.
>
> (Focus group, London, 15 March 2002)

But Ayşe is then accused, by another woman in the group, of adopting an 'emotional approach' to the events of September 11. When asked what she means by this, this second woman replies, 'She [Ayşe] comes home and says to her parents, "how ruthless you are, people are dying and how could you think like this?".' She finds Ayşe too sensitive, and suggests that she has been overly influenced by what she has seen on television ('The death of these people, the collapse of the buildings, blood, people crying, blood being spilt. Of course, this affects you. That's why we have this emotional response.') A third woman in the group also reacts against what she, too, considers to be Ayşe's overly emotional stance. 'We are not affected by this emotionally,' she says, 'because, what we are saying is, lots of children are dying. We're more used to these things. We've either heard it from our relatives, or from people who have been tortured.' What we are seeing here is a confrontation between a mode of thinking that privileges immediate and spontaneous response to the September 11 events, and one that privileges invested collective experiences and commitments. In the first case, what is being valued is the honesty of emotional response to the events of September 11, while, in the second, the premium is put upon emotional detachment and lucidity, which is regarded as the only way to get at the truth of the events.

At a later point in the discussion, there is some debate about whether Osama bin Laden could be blamed for the attacks, or whether the United States in some way planned them. One young man, whom I will call Ali, makes the case for the plausibility of this latter scenario. He speculates on the available evidence (as he sees it):

> Five thousand Jews hadn't gone to work that day. You think, and Israel enters into the equation. Then you say to yourself that something is going on. It's either bin Laden who did it, or Mossad, or Israel, or America. If we look at it objectively, let's start off saying that it wasn't America. You look at the information you've got, you evaluate America's power, how they use people, and you think about how this event could be beneficial for the American economy. On the other hand, what kind of proof did they give

> that bin Laden did it? Nothing. They just came and said it's bin Laden. Who is bin Laden? They started picking up on him after the event. Who is Israel most connected to? America. It again links there, it links to America. The logical links are to America.

Ali's 'case' is detached and dispassionate, but it is trapped in a dogmatic mode. His 'evidence' works according to a kind of deductive and pseudo-rationalistic logic, based on what he already 'knows' about Americans, Jews, and Muslims. The world is made to conform to the rigid template that orders his mental space. In contrast with Ali's schema, Ayşe has a more nuanced perspective, a more qualified approach to September 11. She is more prepared to take in the 'facts', and more prepared to accept the complexity of the evidence. Ayşe takes into account the debates that were conducted in the British media, and acknowledges the different tenor of those debates. 'The British press didn't directly accuse bin Laden,' she observes. 'People debated this in the newspapers. Most of the people in England don't care about it. They don't have any desire for revenge. They don't say, "let's attack the Middle East".' Of course, she is influenced by her Kurdish background, and she is ready to acknowledge some of the points that Ali is making. But her position is generally one of greater ambivalence, recognizing the difficulties and uncertainties in the available evidence. 'I'm not saying that it is bin Laden [who staged the attacks],' she says, 'But, in my mind, I can't accept that something like this could have been planned by America.' Ayşe is prepared to contemplate certain paths of thought that are not all conceivable within Ali's more defensive and two-dimensional worldview.

What we see in this group discussion, then, is a tension between two different modes of thought. One kind of thinking was more informed by a sense of 'belonging' to a collective project and experience, and carried with it the danger of being closed to new possibilities; the other was more in touch with the ambivalences in the position of Turkish migrants in the period following September 11, and more open to complexity, qualification, and reformulation. In the discussions taking place within this group, we can see an encounter between flexible thinking and dogmatic thinking: thinking in which 'individuals use tropes to think their way through problematic situations', and thinking in which individuals 'employ cultural tropes to secure themselves', to adopt Cohen's (1994: 138–139) distinction. I have said that the identity question, with respect to the West versus Islam agenda, was for a long time a sleeping dog. What the events of September 11 did was to bring it back to consciousness. The dialogue and debate in this group brought out precisely what is at issue in this question, showing how different selves might mobilize different forms to quite different intellectual and imaginative ends.

Conclusion

What I have found, talking to Turkish and Kurdish migrants in London about their thinking on the September 11 events, is that there was almost an anger that

the whole interpretative frame in the West surrounding the September 11 events has been one of a binary polarization, between the West and Islam: the West associated with civilizational values and Islam with violence against it. Turks and Kurds, however, do not immediately fall into one of the polar positions. We might say that what characterizes the Turkish mental space is the way in which relations to the West and Islam are negotiated positions; and that there are many nuances and varieties of the negotiated positions (and these positions are not fixed and stable). However, the binary reading of the September 11 events imposed a rigid frame, expecting a wholesale rejection of one camp and the embrace of the other. This mode of being is clearly very much against the idea of entertaining negotiated positions where the central feature is interaction between and mobility across different registers. Turks, following the tragic events of September 11, were pushed to abandoning their seemingly fuzzy, contradictory, and compromising positions, and to embrace en masse one or the other. This, they were very reluctant (and perhaps, luckily, unable) to do.

Another point we have to understand about the Turkish-speaking population in London is that many of them are from leftist backgrounds (of different kinds) with strong anti-imperialist and Third World orientations, consequently harbouring anti-American sentiments. These sentiments, which were dormant, were woken up after the September 11 events. I would hasten to add that an important contributory factor here was the employment of the polarized thinking that marginalized and criminalized migrants, especially from Islamic backgrounds. Many in the focus groups complained about how they began to feel guilty because of the way in which Muslims were blamed for the attacks. 'I wish it was Karlos (Cakal) [who'd done it]' said one of them bitterly. People felt cornered and they felt justified in unleashing their anti-American sentiments as a way of explaining the events.

We could say that what they heard on the media in general (this includes the Turkish transnational media and the British media) did not help them in any way to revise their deeply felt anti-Americanism. It was either only those with sophisticated thoughtfulness, or those with the least anti-American feelings in them, who were able to hear the nuances and pick up the different tones across the different media. We have discussed elsewhere how the care structures of the Turkish media do not quite work for the Turkish migrants living their lives outside of the routines in Turkey (Aksoy and Robins 2003). Turkish migrants relate to Turkish television from a critical distance. They do not watch the Turkish channels from the inside, so to speak, but actually operate in and across many cultural spaces at once and there is a constant comparison going on. When Turkish people in London were watching the coverage of the September 11 events, they were already coming from a position of dislocated viewing, already having in their mental spaces past reflections on how Turkish channels had covered (in biased ways) important events, like the Galatasaray–Leeds football match incidents. There was already a critical sensibility as to how Turkish channels covered the news in particular. This sensibility, we find, was much sharpened during September 11. Their critical distance made them aware of the ideologies

and biases of the Turkish channels during this period. This is a point that goes against the idea that Turkish migrants would think differently because of their different cultural and national identity, that they automatically become publics of another discourse about the September 11 events.

There was not much coming from the Turkish stations that would help the Turks to modify their anti-American drift. Nor was there much coming from the British channels. On the contrary, British channels were seen as the propagators of the crusader mentality. With no singular authoritative resource to draw on, Turkish people in London had to do a lot of thinking for themselves. We find from talking to Turks and Kurds that this thinking process was rather a difficult one. On the one hand, they were in a doubly estranged position. They were identifying neither fully with the West nor with Islam, yet it was also very difficult to articulate what the new negotiated position would be between these now polarized positions. This required creative and reflective thinking. Of course, the clash of civilizations mentality around was not helping in this endeavour; when the emphasis tilted towards clash, it was very difficult to think about interaction and negotiation. On the other hand, their experiential and dogmatic learning told them about the persecution and destruction caused by the US (and British) politics in the world. There was a danger of beginning to see the United States as evil number one.

This is certainly not the creative and complex thinking that was required following the critical events of September 11. In our discussions, we did, however, see a tension between two different modes of thought – one informed by a sense of 'belonging' to a collective project and experience and hence a reaffirming one, and the other more open to complexity, and therefore more risky. The first modality carried the danger of rigidity and foreclosure, and the second the danger of being blinded by spontaneity and confusion.

I would like to end with an important observation, coming out of the last group discussion that I quoted from. In this group Ayşe and Ali represent these different modalities of thinking, but what has been crucial for the discussion in this group to carry on was that these different modalities were in a dialogical relationship with one another. In other words, Ayşe and Ali were prepared to talk to one another and learn from one another. It was this dialogue which enhanced the thinking in this group. Ayşe needed to hear Ali's rational, detached, historically informed views on the suffering caused by the US politics in the Middle East, and, by the same token, Ali needed to be sensitized to the nuances in the American and British positions with respect to the September 11 events. Rather than defending their corner to the exclusion of the other position, they were prepared to allow themselves to move in and out of these different modalities of thinking. This kind of dialogical mode, surely, is a first step in creative thinking, that kind of thinking that we still lack in the aftermath of September 11.

Postscript

The assumption has been that the national public sphere is moved and shaped by a singular national structure of feeling. September 11 provided a challenge to this basic assumption. The reality is that societies have become more complex and that the idea of a unitary public culture has become more problematical. This is what September 11 brought to the fore. What became apparent was a fracturing of public opinion. What became clear were the potential consequences of the new social reality in which societies are made up of people with multiple allegiances, transnational connections, and transcultural references.

A further assumption has been that the national and international have been separate spaces. It has been imagined that the national space could in some way be detached from the wider world of 'international affairs', and in some way insulated from its repercussions. September 11 showed that this was also a problematical basic assumption of the national mentality. What we have seen is the difficulty in keeping the events in Palestine and Iraq out of the public space of Britain. It has become increasingly difficult to keep them at a distance, to confine them to the world of other people's problems.

These challenges have become ever more apparent; even more so with the bombing of Afghanistan and the war on Iraq. But what we find is that the media are still operating within the logic of the 'national'. The gulf between what national media systems say and report and what the public wants to hear is getting deeper and wider by the day. This became evident during the bombing campaign of Afghanistan and then during the war on Iraq when the British media came increasingly under attack for being biased. There was all the more reason to seek out alternative sources of information. Perhaps more than ever before, the media with their fixation on the 'national' were not in tune with the increasingly transnational and diverse sensibility of the audiences. This is of major concern, especially in the context of our desire for creative thinking in times of crises.

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Notes

1 The empirical research that I carried out was part of a large-scale project in Britain, titled 'After September 11'. It looked at the television coverage of the September 11 events and their reception in UK families and households. The analysis of television coverage was coordinated by Richard Paterson (British Film Institute) and the reception study was coordinated by Dr Marie Gillespie (Open University). I conducted my empirical work between February and March 2002.

2 When I talk about Turkish-speaking migrants I am including Turkish migrants from Turkey, Kurdish migrants from Turkey, and Turkish Cypriot migrants from Cyprus

and Turkey. The term Turkish-speaking is being used within the community itself as a way of encapsulating this rather heterogeneous community, where one of the main common elements is the Turkish language. The Turkish-speaking community in Britain is rather a small one, about 200,000 strong, living mainly in London. I sometimes use Turkish or Turks in the text, and these are intended as shorthand for Turkish-speaking migrants. I specify Kurdish when I need to do so.

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