

The Impact of the American War on Terror on Malaysian Islam

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ABSTRACT *This essay provides an introductory discussion of the impact of the American war on terrorism on Malaysia, a Muslim country with a long record of parliamentary democracy and one of the most developed in the Muslim world. With a discussion of a possible decades-long US military and political engagement with the Muslim world as a background, the essay presents a detailed account of the impact of the US wars in Afghanistan, the Philippines and Iraq on Malaysian national politics, particularly on its political Islam. It is argued that the war on terrorism has benefited Mahathir Mohamad, helping to reverse his declining political fortunes following his sacking of Anwar Ibrahim as his deputy, which influenced his retirement from politics. The essay explains the reasons, external and domestic, for Malaysia's participation in the global war on terrorism and the extent of its involvement, including its leadership role in anti-terrorism in the Muslim world. It also discusses the views of Mahathir and Anwar on the roots of Muslim terrorism and what it will take to overcome this problem. Both believe the resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is crucial to the defeat of terrorism in the Muslim world. The essay concludes with an examination of the possibility of Malaysia entering a new phase in its war on terrorism as Abdullah Badawi, Mahathir's successor, and Anwar appear to have convergent views on political Islam and on the importance of democracy as a tool to fight terrorism.*

The United States, Islam and the Muslim World: the Future

When future historians write about the September 11, 2001 terrorist aerial attack on the heart of the United States (US), an attack for which Osama bin Laden finally admitted responsibility, they would probably view it as the single most important event to have influenced the course of world history and shaped global politics in the first few decades of the twenty-first century. Within a matter of just three years of the tragic event we have seen enough signs to lend support to such a judgment. No sooner had the US revealed the Muslim al-Qa'ida as the chief suspect in the attack, than a backlash against Muslims began to erupt, exacting its toll of victims. From the point of view of the 1.4 billion-strong global Muslim community, the attack has succeeded in putting Muslims and Islam on trial in the open court of world opinion. But there is also the

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general perception that the attack has helped to open a new chapter in the modern history of US relations and engagement with Islam and the Muslim world.

In responding to the external attack, the first on its soil since Pearl Harbor, the US under President George W. Bush launched the controversial 'war on terrorism' that took its military might to three different geo-cultural regions of the Muslim world. First, there was the invasion of the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan that has been 'punished' for giving sanctuary to bin Laden and his al-Qa'ida and failing to comply with the US demand to hand him over to US authorities. Then there was the dispatch of US troops to the Philippines to help it fight the notorious Abu Sayyaf, a group with alleged links to al-Qa'ida that has been waging a separatist war in the Mindanao region in the south with the goal of establishing an independent Islamic state. This was followed by the war in Iraq purportedly to remove Saddam Hussein from power because of his possession of weapons-of-mass-destruction. With raging disputes about its real motives both within and outside the US right from the beginning, this action has turned out to be the most controversial and also the most devastating of the three.

What has happened so far in Afghanistan and Iraq with their untold destruction in both physical and human terms, and also with repeated promises of their 'societal reconstruction' coming from the US and its allies, can only mean that a major political and religious transformation awaits the two countries. Whether the accompanying change will be for the better or for the worse no one can yet be certain. But one thing is sure: all these wars waged in the name of fighting 'Muslim terrorism' will in the long run have profound consequences for both the US and the Muslim world. Already we see the US's engagement with Islam and Muslims at home and abroad intensifying on many fronts. Post-September 11 the US has become obsessed with security in a way not seen for a very long time. It is Islam that features prominently in that security issue. Since the war in Afghanistan failed to destroy al-Qa'ida, and with bin Laden still alive and well to strike again at the US, the security issue will remain a major national concern for many more years to come. The US is paying dearly for its security.

September 11 has forced the whole nation to pose in unison the question 'why do they hate us?' and to ponder its answers. Since 'they' in this case who 'hate us' turned out to be Muslims whose religion is Islam, answers have invariably focused on what Americans perceive to be the 'Muslim' and 'Islam' problem. A good indication of the importance of post-September 11 US views about the 'Muslim and Islam' problem is that many individuals and groups, both religious and secular, feel compelled to take a stand on Islam ranging from President Bush's 'Islam is a religion of peace' to Franklin Graham's 'Islam is a wicked and violent religion'. Given the wide range of these perceptions, some of which Muslims regard as blatantly 'anti-Islam', and the equally diverse Muslim responses they have elicited, the present debates and discourses on Islam can only become more spirited as the war on terrorism drags on, resulting in more keenly contested positions on Islam not only among Americans but also in Muslim societies worldwide.

Post-September 11, the US struggles to convince Muslims that its war on terrorism is directed against the terrorists and their sympathizers and not against Islam. But many Muslims perceive otherwise, citing the US conduct of the war and its overzealous implicating of Muslims in terrorism as proof of its hostility toward Muslims and Islam. Overcoming its negative image in the Muslim world is crucial in the long run to the US's winning the war on terrorism. But to achieve this, the US needs to revise its policies in the Muslim world, particularly in the Middle East with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict. So post-September 11, the US is confronted with a global political situation that promises a prolonged engagement with the Muslim world regardless of whether it chooses to pursue its present Middle East policies or to bring about a lasting peace in the region through a just settlement of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Either way, the US’s growing entanglement with the political affairs of the Muslim world is assured. Similarly, the political and religious impact on the Middle East and the Muslim world at large is going to be tremendous.

As a matter of fact, the war on terrorism has already left a visible and significant impact on Muslim societies all over the globe whether they are majorities or minorities. Unfortunately, the Western media tend to highlight the impact of the war largely in terms of a growing Muslim anger against the US and the ‘radicalization’ of Muslim politics. But the impact is much wider than this, in fields ranging from politics to education, and from religion to economics. Muslims are also looking at themselves and reflecting on their strengths and weaknesses, their faults and their virtues. They debate with each other on religion, democracy, the global order, pluralism, human rights, gender relations, poverty and development, and the meaning of extremism and terrorism in the context of the post-September 11 world. With the war on terrorism as an important background, all these issues have acquired a new meaning and significance for Muslims. Intra-Muslim debates on these issues are likely to influence the direction of Muslim thinking about their own societies as well as about others, especially the US.

Unfortunately no proper study has so far been undertaken on this broader impact of the war on terrorism, not even on any specific Muslim country, let alone on the Muslim world as a whole. This essay seeks to provide an introductory assessment of the ongoing impact of the war on terrorism on Malaysia, an important Muslim country in the community of nations. The impact on Malaysia may not be the same as on other Muslim countries, whether in kind or in intensity. But Malaysia does provide a good case study of what the war on terrorism means to Muslims all over the world, of how it has impacted Muslim lives and thinking, and how it has radically influenced Muslim perceptions of the US. Malaysia may be far from the scene of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the ongoing fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, but these issues are very much at the heart of its international concerns. Worthy of mention here is that Malaysians, both Muslims and non-Muslims alike, have negative perceptions of the role of the US in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Malaysia is, of course, just next door to the US’s other front in the war on terrorism, the southern Philippines. But many Malaysians fail to see any good reason necessitating the sending of US troops to the region. The threat of terrorism in the region could have been overcome without these troops.

The War on Terrorism Spreads to Southeast Asia

If the attack on the US can be compared with an earthquake, then its tremors may be said to have been felt as far east as Malaysia and Indonesia, the heartland of Islam in Southeast Asia. It is of greater consequence that these tremors have in turn caused the eruption of new regional earthquakes, the biggest being in the world-famed tropical resort of Bali, a holiday paradise for Western tourists. There were smaller shocks hitting various Philippine and Indonesian islands, but these have been largely unnoticed or ignored by the outside world. Warnings that other Southeast Asian nations, especially Malaysia and Singapore, would be hit by such earthquakes were frequently given, usually by

Western governments on the basis of their own intelligence sources, much to the annoyance of regional leaders like Mahathir Mohammad,¹ the recently retired Malaysian Prime Minister. Thus far these nations have been spared the catastrophe that has befallen the Philippines and Indonesia, the two worst hit in the region.

What is the real nature of these man-made 'earthquakes'? It is quite clear that these are 'political earthquakes' since all the explosions that have rocked the region in the last few years appear to be politically motivated acts of terrorism. Although this terrorist wrath is possibly directed at the ruling establishment in each country concerned, its primary underlying motive is evidently anti-Americanism.² The extension of the US war on terrorism to Southeast Asia is supposed to combat al-Qa'ida, contain its threat and ultimately destroy its global network, thus ensuring the protection of American interests in the region. However, the Bush Administration's decision to declare Southeast Asia the US's second front in that war has increased both anti-American sentiment and the threat of terrorism against Western interests in the region.

The Philippines, America's former colony, was chosen to be the front-line state in the Southeast Asian war on terrorism. The new front was officially opened up in Zamboanga in the southern part of the country on 31 January 2002 with the launching of the joint Philippines–US military exercises called *Balikatan*. These exercises were to be followed by actual ground operations on the island of Basilan against the Abu Sayyaf. Many in the country, and the region, have criticized the opening of this front as unjustified, a view echoed within the US itself. Critics contend that the American military presence to create the front is 'disproportionate to the evidence of terrorism in Southeast Asia', thus suggesting some form of 'ulterior motive'.³ So heated has been the ensuing debate on the wisdom of the front and so sensitive is the issue for many Filipinos that the Philippines President, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, reportedly appealed to the US Secretary of State Colin Powell to not refer to the Philippines as the 'second front' in the war on terrorism.⁴

In the aftermath of the Bali bombing on 12 October 2002 regional perspectives on terrorism altered. While many acknowledge the existence of the terrorism threat to the region, the wisdom of extending the American military presence in Southeast Asia is still stubbornly questioned and regional voices call for a non-military approach to fighting terrorism rather than an extension of armed conflict.

Even before the official launching of the 'war front-line' in the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore were already engaged in their own 'little wars' on suspected Muslim militants. Malaysia's first so-called 'pre-emptive strike' against militants pre-dated the September 11 attacks on America.⁵ However, the momentum of Malaysia's war on militants increased significantly after the attack as it came under strong pressure from the US to investigate the extent of local involvement in al-Qa'ida-led international terrorism.⁶ In January 2002 the Singapore government, a strong supporter of US military presence in the region, arrested fifteen suspected terrorists in a swoop carried out in December 2001 under the Internal Security Act. With these arrests the government claimed to have broken up a network of militants targeting Western and Israeli embassies, their business interests and military installations. Of those arrested thirteen were said to be members of a secretive organization, the *Jemaah Islamiah* (JI), an organization suspected of links to al-Qa'ida,⁷ including its top leader in the island city-state, Ibrahim Maidin. Their arrests helped reveal the extensive and well-coordinated nature of the organization's regional network.⁸

With this major breakthrough in intelligence gathering about the JI network, the regional war on terrorism entered a new phase. With the Association of South East

Asian Nations increasing the coordination of counter-terrorism measures against the JI and other militant groups, the war on terrorism has involved the whole region. The 'internationalization and militarization'⁹ of the war on terrorism through the deployment of US troops in the Philippines has resulted in a significant impact on the public imagination among Southeast Asians, especially Muslims. The Abu Sayyaf, the main target of the Filipino and US troops in Mindanao, and the JI, hunted by the intelligence and security apparatus in neighboring states, are intricately linked to one another. The reality of interdependence between organizations has dictated that security efforts are coordinated and executed at the regional level.

Malaysia Joining the War on its Own Terms

Clearly, Malaysia has been active in the regional war on terrorism, a fact the US and its allies have duly recognized and appreciated. But while proving to be committed to fighting terrorism nationally and globally,¹⁰ Mahathir and his successor, Abdullah Badawi, have also been openly critical of the current US vision and conduct. For international and domestic reasons, both leaders want Malaysia to join the war on its own terms. In the case of Mahathir in particular, quite obviously as a high-profile Muslim political leader with a constituency of admirers spanning the whole Muslim world, he has sought publicly to distance himself from the US.

Many examples evidence Mahathir's desire to be seen as politically independent. Among them are developments such as the Malaysian government's blocking of attempts by the Bush administration to have Yazid Sufaat, a Malaysian citizen suspected of being an al-Qa'ida operative, extradited to the US for questioning over the September 11 attacks.¹¹ Also, Mahathir criticized the US and its Western allies for poor handling of the war on terror and for failing to address the underlying causes which move 'ordinary people with families, sufficient income and [who enjoy] a comfortable life . . . to die a horrendous death'.¹² To Mahathir this mismanagement of the underlying causes of terrorism has also had a negative impact on global economic and security conditions. Finally, Mahathir has indicated his belief that the US-led war on terror has succeeded in turning Huntington's idea of the 'clash of civilizations' into reality.¹³ The situation is only exacerbated by the anti-Islam outbursts of certain prominent right-wing Christian leaders, closely identified with the power base of President Bush.¹⁴ Mahathir's sentiments on US conduct may be dismissed as misconceived in the West but are widely shared by Muslims in the region, including his domestic opponents.

Mahathir has been ingenious in exploiting the war on terrorism to his political advantage. By taking an independent stance on the war, he not only boosted his image as 'defender of Islam' in the Muslim world but also deprived his Muslim opposition of scoring points in their attack on the US. Critics have also accused him of exploiting the war on terrorism to weaken the opposition, especially the Islamic Party (PAS), by linking some of its leaders and members to terrorism. In the cause of 'national security', Mahathir's government has arrested many opposition political activists under the country's Internal Security Act, which allows for indefinite detention without trial. He curtailed civil liberties and enforced new policies that help to further shrink the country's limited democratic space. Many Malaysians would agree that the war on terrorism in the country has claimed liberalization in human rights and democratic practices among its major victims. This brings up the important question, no less important to Muslim democrats

than to their American counterparts, of whether or not winning a war on terrorism has necessarily to be at the expense of civil liberties and political freedom. In the view of many observers of the Southeast Asian political scene, a progressive democratization of Muslim nations and societies in the region is a necessary condition for a permanent regional victory against terrorism. This question in the Malaysian context will be discussed later as we examine the conflicting views of Mahathir and Anwar Ibrahim, its two most well-known contemporary international figures.

Three post-September 11 events stand out as particularly influential in their impact on political Islam in Malaysia, as well as in the rest of Muslim Southeast Asia. These are the war on the Taliban in Afghanistan, the war against the Abu Sayyaf and the war in Iraq. All three involved the US on the one hand and either a Muslim group or a Muslim nation on the other. Not surprisingly many Malaysian Muslims became suspicious of the US's real intentions toward Islam and the Muslim world. The three wars have helped energize Malaysian political Islam to new levels and to intensify the domestic contest between the country's major political groups for identification and popularity as the defenders of Islam against the US. The two biggest Malay-Muslim political parties on opposite sides of the political divide, United Malays National Organization (UMNO) in the ruling coalition, and PAS in the opposition front, have both been exploiting the US's wars to bolster their fortunes in national politics. Even though all Malaysian political parties are opposed to these wars, political sectarianism has prevented the emergence of a legitimate and truly 'Malaysian position' on them. Only on the issue of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict has there been a 'national consensus' and a united Malaysian stand.¹⁵

Providing Muslim Leadership in Anti-Terrorism

It is true enough that Mahathir is deeply critical of the US approach to fighting terrorism, but he worked hard at fighting terrorism in his own way. He was applauded by many Muslims for strongly criticizing the US, but probably the same people scolded him for denouncing suicide bombing as totally unjustifiable and 'un-Islamic'. Unlike bin Laden, he has messages for both the American audience and the Muslim audience. He tells the US its approach amounts to 'fighting one form of terrorism with another', a counter-productive attempt. Equally forcefully, he tells Muslims terrorism is against their religion, and will not solve their problems. He is only speaking on behalf of many Muslims when he poignantly asks whether the three wars the US has launched in the post-September 11 period have not actually helped to swell the human reservoirs of disgruntled and angry young Muslims. The war on terrorism does not appear to have stemmed the flow of fresh recruits to the cause of jihad against the West. Claims by the perpetrators of the Bali bombing that it was in retaliation for the US war in Afghanistan seem to support the above assertion. The war on terrorism appears to have defeated its own purpose. Instead of combating terrorism, US policy has contributed to its escalation. So what might be a better alternative?

Mahathir's Malaysia did work for an alternative. He articulated an ideological position on terrorism that spells out the need to accompany an effective strategy to contain terrorism with tackling its root causes. He then sought to sell this approach at international conferences on terrorism, some of which he hosted. Not all his ideas were well received. The Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers on Terrorism he hosted on 1 April 2002 rejected Malaysia's official definition of terrorism because it included suicide

bombing.¹⁶ In a Muslim world conspicuously dry of leadership, Malaysia's initiatives still look like an 'oasis of enlightenment'. Mahathir's last speech (and perhaps the most important he ever delivered) on religious extremism and terrorism before an international Muslim audience was on 16 October 2003, at the opening of the sixth Muslim Heads of State meeting which Malaysia hosted in its administrative capital, Putra Jaya. Malaysia is currently serving a three-year term as chairman of the Organization of Islamic Conference's (OIC's) secretariat.

Malaysia also responded to the new situation created by the US second war front in the Philippines. If the southern Muslim islands bordering Malaysia have started becoming fertile grounds for international terrorist training, it is because separatist violence has plagued the region for decades. Abu Sayyaf terrorism is deeply rooted in the unresolved dispute between Muslim separatist movements and the Christian-controlled central government in Manila. New peace initiatives are called for if regional terrorism is to be contained. With the blessings of both President Arroyo and the OIC, Malaysia currently plays the lead role in negotiating a peace deal between Manila and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the country's largest Muslim separatist group with membership links to JI and al-Qa'ida.

The OIC has long taken an interest in the peaceful resolution of conflict in the Mindanao region. However, the peace agreements it has brokered have failed to produce lasting results. In the light of the regional determination to win the war on terrorism and the emergence of a new, more pragmatic leadership in the MILF, Malaysia's present mandated attempt to help secure peace in Mindanao may well have a better chance of succeeding than earlier efforts. Malaysia's anti-terrorism initiatives in the OIC and in the Philippines conflict provide good examples of how September 11 and its aftermath have pushed it into assuming leadership roles in the war on terrorism. The two related roles have provided Malaysia with a rare opportunity to form new perspectives on terrorism and methods of combating it that are more sensitive to the legitimate interests and concerns of both the Muslim world and the United States.

September 11 and the US Wars: from Sympathy to Hostility

The September 11 attacks evoked widespread sympathy for the US in Southeast Asia. Muslims throughout the region were horrified by the senseless barbarity of the attack, which was carried out in the name of their religion. In Malaysia, Mahathir, well known for his frequent angry outbursts against the West, paid an unexpected visit to the US Embassy to sign the book of condolence. The Embassy received a multitude of sympathy messages from a large cross-section of the Malaysian public, including leaders of the opposition political parties like PAS, traditionally a vocal critic of US foreign policies in the Islamic world. The late Fadzil Noor, then the President of PAS, and Abdul Hadi Awang, its current leader, were among the prominent '*ulamā*' in the Islamic world who issued a press statement expressing condolence to the families of the victims. The statement also expressed deep sympathy for the US. It was unfortunate that this statement, issued at such a crucial time, was hardly mentioned in the Western mainstream media.

However, the US counter-attack in the declared war against terrorism that saw its troops going into Afghanistan, Mindanao and Iraq has caused Malaysian sympathies to evaporate quickly. Various global surveys¹⁷ conducted in the two-year period since the 'liberation of Afghanistan from the al-Qa'ida-backed Taliban' have shown the once widespread Muslim

sympathy for the US has been replaced by an increasing resentment for the way that super-power is prosecuting the war on terrorism. The 2003 global survey by the Washington-based Pew Research Center for the People and Press, conducted after the invasion of Iraq, showed that hostility toward the US in Muslim countries such as Indonesia, Turkey, Jordan and Pakistan had intensified in comparison with its 2002, post-invasion of Afghanistan, level.¹⁸

Malaysia was not included in this latest survey. But if we consider the opinions of Muslim political and religious leaders and the leaders of non-governmental organizations across the spectrum it may be concluded that the majority of Malaysian Muslims have become more critical of the US since the launching of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Importantly, according to a survey by the *New Straits Times*, most respondents 'were opposed to the policies of the Bush administration, rather than the US or its citizens per se'.¹⁹ The survey reveals three major issues that have caused sympathy for the US to diminish and hostility toward it to increase. These are the US's backing of Israel in the latter's continued occupation of Palestine, its invasion of Afghanistan and its invasion of Iraq. The general perception Malaysian Muslims have of the US post-September 11 is that, despite the Bush administration's pronouncement in support of the creation of the Palestinian state, its support for Israel is becoming excessively unjust. Also, despite repeated assurances to the contrary, the US's global war on terrorism continues 'to be seen as a war against Islam and Muslims'.²⁰

Hostility to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq was widespread, and still is. Opposition to war cut across the traditional political divide and included the perspectives of the non-Muslim political parties. In a closed meeting with President Bush during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit in Shanghai, held two weeks after the aerial bombing of Afghanistan, Mahathir voiced his strong opposition to the war and 'the anger and frustration of the Muslim world' at the bombings.²¹

Mahathir's main justification for his stand was his fear of massive civilian casualties, a fear that turned out not to be totally unfounded,²² and his belief that 'attacking Afghanistan was not the solution to the problem' of terrorism. On the first day of the bombing he told the Malaysian Parliament that although Malaysia supported the war on terror, it was opposed to the military strikes on Afghanistan, which it considered to be counter-productive.²³ He emphasized Malaysia's right to adopt a different approach to fighting terrorism, a stand that Mahathir claimed Bush had understood.

As Afghan civilian casualties mounted Mahathir became more critical of the war, as can be judged from a speech he delivered as host to an international conference on terrorism in Kuala Lumpur, less than a month after meeting Bush in China. In an obvious reference to the Bush administration's rationale for and conduct of the war, he argued that attacking Afghanistan was unbecoming of civilized people since it was as unprincipled as the attacks of September 11.²⁴ He asserted that the operation in Afghanistan would not result in the killing or capture of all the terrorists but could 'actually result in the spawning of more terrorists' who would be 'willing to die to avenge what is to them a gross injustice and cruelty'.²⁵

The above consideration apart, domestic politics was without doubt an important factor influencing Mahathir's decision to oppose the US military operation. No Malay-Muslim leader concerned about political support from his community could afford to be seen taking even a 'neutral' stand in the conflict. Mahathir was concerned about possible militant reactions from Muslims in his country and the sectarian exploitation of the issue by

opposition parties, particularly PAS, that could adversely affect Muslim support for his own party. Clearly PAS took a far stronger position on the issue, with some of its leaders accusing the US of being a 'terrorist state'. The late Fadzil Noor had rejected September 11 as a 'heinous crime', yet as the war on terror was launched he became so incensed by the US operation in Afghanistan that he openly called for a jihad against the US.

In Fadzil Noor's view, a jihad is called for on behalf of Afghanistan since it has been attacked without any strong proof of its involvement with terrorism. From this perspective the war in Afghanistan was formulated as not simply against the Taliban but rather against all Muslims.²⁶ Controversially, he also gave the green light to party members who volunteered to go to Afghanistan to fight on the Taliban side. Although he claimed his call for jihad was not in defense of the Taliban regime, but rather in defense of Afghanistan as 'an Islamic nation being attacked by an enemy of Islam',²⁷ many in the country failed to see the distinction and perceived PAS as sympathetic to the version of Islam advocated by the Taliban, and even to al-Qa'ida. This view was reinforced, when, within days of the air strikes against Afghanistan, the party held a demonstration led by Fadzil Noor in front of the US embassy in Kuala Lumpur with many in the crowd 'brandishing Osama bin Laden T-shirts and pictures' and calling the United States 'the mother of all terrorists'.²⁸ Several other anti-US rallies and demonstrations were held not only in the capital city but also in more distant smaller towns such as Alor Star in Kedah in the north, Mahathir's home state.²⁹

However, reactions to the US attacks from partners of PAS in the Barisan Alternatif (Alternative Front) were less fiery. Keadilan, the predominantly Chinese Democratic Action Party (DAP), and the Malaysian People's Socialist Party all opposed the attacks on several grounds,³⁰ but none of them issued calls that could be construed as inflaming the already volatile situation in Afghanistan and dragging the Muslim world into a larger confrontation with the West. Their more or less similar position on the Afghanistan issue was perceived as much closer to Mahathir's than to PAS. They all agreed on seeking 'an end to terrorism and to bring to justice the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks', not through waging war but 'through the international leader system'. These three parties have no liking for al-Qa'ida and the Taliban regime.³¹ Like Mahathir's, their main consideration in opposing the attacks was the concern that these would result in heavy civilian casualties. As the US aerial bombardments and military operations continued, many notable Malaysian critics of the war including the DAP leader Lim Kit Siang, a Chinese non-Muslim who is the country's most senior opposition leader, contended that the US 'war on terrorism' had degenerated into a 'war of terror' against innocent Afghan civilians.³²

Within Malaysia's domestic arena questions of the legality of the US action and its implications united political leaders from both the ruling and opposition parties.³³ However, this unification did not conceal the differences of political opinion. The uncompromising call to jihad by PAS was rejected by other political parties. Most non-governmental Muslim organizations, including the large and influential Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), also dissociated themselves from PAS and its call for jihad. For PAS the legitimacy of the call to jihad was not negotiable. PAS might have seen the US military campaign in Afghanistan as an opportunity to bolster its image as the 'defender of Islam', but subsequent developments in Malaysian politics suggest this was ill-conceived. The ruling UMNO seized on the PAS call to jihad to portray the

opposition party as 'Malaysia's Taliban' and the general public concern about terrorism in the wake of September 11 negatively affected the political fortunes of PAS. Even its efforts to gain political mileage from humanitarian initiatives in Afghanistan seemed to be ineffective as it had to compete with the better organized and publicized humanitarian works of the UMNO-dominated government.³⁴

The invasion of Iraq further hardened the low opinion of the US held by Malaysian Muslims. To many Malaysians the invasion of Iraq came as no surprise, but only tended to confirm their earlier view of US foreign policy under President Bush. Muslim organizations, political or otherwise, went through the same rituals of jihad declarations, anti-US rallies and demonstrations, critical media statements and promises of humanitarian aid to war victims to express their anger at the US.

Debating the Roots of Terrorism

Many groups and individuals in the US have complained that Muslim 'moderates' have not been forceful enough in denouncing the September 11 attacks. Actually, there were Muslim denunciations from all over the globe, but these were under-reported. However, these denunciations have little value if unaccompanied by a critical 'self-examination' of the 'Muslim malaise' that contributed to not only the September 11 tragedy but also the 'Muslim catastrophes' in Afghanistan and Iraq. Muslims may point to US faults, but are they also looking at their own faults? What is clearly lacking in the post-September 11 Muslim world is self-criticism, an attempt at a self-reflection or self-understanding of its internal problems. In this context, Anwar Ibrahim's critique of Muslim responses to September 11 and the Bush war on terrorism constitutes something both rare and significant. Writing in the *Asia Times*, Anwar expressed his views in a highly significant article with the captivating heading 'Who hijacked Islam?' Within this article he went beyond expressing deep sympathy for the US and delivered a strong condemnation of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

He also criticized Mahathir's government for its 'hypocritical' stand on the tragedy.³⁵ Anwar wanted Muslims to respond to the attack by doing more than issuing press statements of sympathy for its victims and the US. In his view, Muslims should condemn the attack and 'the condemnation must be without reservation', because that would be in conformity with the teachings of their own religion. He introduced the article with a quotation from the Qur'an: 'Let not your hatred of others cause you to act unjustly against them.' Anwar takes this verse as providing a scriptural basis for condemning September 11 and rejecting violence as a means of achieving political goals, irrespective of how legitimate those goals may be.

Anwar argued that Muslims have 'legitimate grievances against the US'³⁶ but that responses such as those of Mohamed Ata and his fellow terrorists and sponsors were categorically wrong and harmful. Furthermore, Anwar asserted that terrorism has inflicted injustice on Islam on two counts. It has taken innocent lives in the name of Islam and it has caused a backlash against Muslims. This position was distinct from the common Muslim response to the September 11 attacks which expressed sympathy for the victims but was uncompromising in laying the blame at the foot of the US. It is not surprising that Anwar's position found little echo in the national media. Anwar's harshest criticism was reserved for the Mahathir administration, which he accused of employing the

state-controlled media 'to stir up anti-American sentiments, while employing much more accommodating language for international diplomacy'.³⁷

Anwar's article was significant in several respects. Of fundamental importance was the fact that it constitutes the first widely known critique of Muslim responses to September 11 by a prominent Muslim leader. Many Westerners have been critical of Muslim responses to the attacks worldwide as they have been perceived as vacillating between condemnation and understanding. But Anwar's critique is singularly important, since it is an 'internal' perspective coming as it were from within the Muslim community itself. Given the magnitude of the backlash against Muslims and Islam, the event of September 11 was bound eventually to generate a Muslim 'self-examination' that would lead either to a healthy internal debate or to deep sectarian conflicts within the community. Anwar's piece is precisely such a self-criticism that has helped to set in motion, at least in the Malaysian context, a national debate on how Muslims should respond to the aftermath of September 11.

Second, in coining 'Who hijacked Islam?' as the title of his article Anwar is obviously seeking to convey the message that mainstream Islam believes in and practices moderation as the core teaching of the religion but has been 'hijacked' by the extremists. He argues that because of both internal and external factors in the post-September 11 Muslim world, there is likely to be a long battle for the soul of Islam between the moderation of the mainstream *umma* and the extremism of fringe groups who believe goals justify means. The adoption by extremist groups of the concept of 'goals justify means' is utterly false from the Islamic point of view. As a guiding principle of political action it is undoubtedly one root cause of political violence and terrorism in many Muslim countries. If in Muslim countries the fight against religious and political extremism is going to be lengthy, then it is because the roots of extremism are many and complex.

Finally, Anwar makes important comments on the roots of Muslim terrorism. He presents a self-examination or self-criticism and distances himself from the tendency among Muslims to blame others for the predicament of the Muslim world. Anwar emphasizes the internal, rather than the external, causes of Muslim terrorism. He cites three major causes: lack of political and social freedom; lack of Muslim participation in the global processes at non-governmental levels; and the failure of the Muslim world to address major international issues affecting the *umma*. Anwar contends the last two factors are largely responsible for nurturing among Muslims widespread feelings of alienation, bitterness and anger against the global order and the remaining superpower. Reflecting popular Muslim views, he considers the tragic suffering of the Afghani people which led to Taliban rule, that of the Iraqis under Saddam's repressive regime (especially the impact of international sanctions) and, of course, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as the most explosive political issues in the Muslim world.

That a chaotic and violent Afghanistan torn apart by ethnic and religious strife has proved to be a fertile breeding ground for international terrorism has been clearly visible to the international community. The fate that has befallen modern Afghanistan is basically a problem of the Muslim world, but, since the Soviet invasion in late 1979, it has also been a problem for the international community. Iraq could yet emerge as a far worse breeding ground for international terrorism than Afghanistan if present trends continue and sectarian conflicts and violence escalate and the overall security situation continues to deteriorate. Southeast Asia in general and Malaysia in particular have already experienced the bitter impact of Afghanistan-bred terrorism on the region. Malaysia has to deal with the threat of terrorism posed by its own citizens like the

Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM) (Malaysian Mujahidin Group), who received their training in the Afghani 'jihad' against the Soviets.

Anwar fears that 'necessity will prompt the United States to seek the collaboration of the governments of Muslim countries' in the fight against terrorism, a collaboration which could occur at the expense of 'democracy and the protection of human rights'. He shares the perception that ruling 'autocrats of all types will seize the opportunity to prop up their regimes and deal a severe blow to democratic movements' as they 'terrorize their critics and dissenters'.³⁸ If that were to happen, Anwar contends, the new democratic movements in the Muslim world 'will regress for a few decades'.

Ironically, the suppression of democracy, political participation and civil society by Muslim governments tolerated by the US is likely to undermine the very ability of the US to win the war on terrorism. Anwar is convinced that 'democracy, political participation and civil society' are the essential factors that will provide the final answer to terrorism. His own country, Malaysia, may be far more democratic than many other Muslim countries, but the same pattern still prevails. Anwar is critical of Mahathir for exploiting the terror war to discredit and stifle his Islamic opposition, particularly in resorting to detention without trial.³⁹

Anwar and Mahathir represent two different Malaysian responses to September 11 and the US-led war on terror. Both have condemned Muslim terrorism in the strongest possible terms, and they have done so with the express intent of defending and protecting 'true' Islam. They have also rejected the identification of Muslims and Islam with terrorism. Both Anwar and Mahathir fully support the war on terrorism, and both agree that the most effective way of fighting terrorism is to remove its causes. But the two differ in their assessment of these root causes, a factor that is reflected in their attitudes towards the US. For Mahathir 'the principal cause is the Palestine issue'.⁴⁰ He argues that the Muslim world is angry with the West, particularly the US, because, as it is unable to help the Palestinians, it expects the West to find a just and peaceful solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. But as the Muslim world sees it, the West is unwilling even to stop 'the Israeli terror' against the Palestinians, let alone set about finding a long-term solution. This reinforces the view that the West is 'anti-Palestine, anti-Arab, and anti-Muslim'.⁴¹ Mahathir sees September 11 as a consequence of that Muslim anger, not of Muslim 'jealousy for the good life and the freedom of other people'.⁴² While most Muslims could contain their anger, a few 'resort[ed] to terror tactics'. So convinced is Mahathir of the cause–effect relationship between the Palestinian problem and Arab-Muslim terrorism that he has no hesitation in claiming 'there would not be those who would be willing to kill themselves in that horrible fashion on September 11' had there been no Palestine issue.⁴³

For Anwar, as earlier discussed, the principal cause of Muslim terrorism is the suppression of 'democracy, political participation, and civil society' in Muslim countries. This is a critical internal factor that goes beyond feelings of helplessness and despondency over the fate of the Palestinians. Anwar does not reject the significance of the Palestinian issue, but asks a more fundamental question: what accounts for Muslim helplessness over the fate of Palestine? Anwar's answer to the question is that Muslim leaders have failed to resolve the Palestinian issue and the main reason for that failure is their denial of freedom to the Muslim masses to participate in the real decision-making processes at both national and global levels. The Muslims first directed their frustration and anger at their rulers for their failures, and only later at the West after it became clear that it would not abandon

authoritarian regimes in the Muslim world and would not impose a just solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

In Anwar's view, the deeper source of Muslim discontent is not dissatisfaction with the West but rather dissatisfaction with Muslim rulers. In light of this view, the Palestinian issue, insofar as it is a Muslim problem, is seen as just one of many manifestations of this internal problem. He cites the pre-September 11 Afghanistan civil war as another example of the same problem that may equally be presented as an important cause of terrorism. What this means is that if Mahathir could confidently assert 'there would have been no September 11 if there had been no Palestinian issue', Anwar with equal confidence could say 'September 11 would not have occurred if there had been no Afghanistan civil war that helped to produce al-Qa'ida.'

Anwar's approach combines promotion of democracy, political participation and civil society with firmness and justice in dealing with extremists and terrorists. He is critical of Mahathir's conduct of the terror war, which he sees as unbalanced, since it projects only firmness at the expense of justice and democracy. From Anwar's point of view, Mahathir has done the right thing by forcefully condemning Muslim terrorism and he has also done well in containing the terrorist and extremist threat in Malaysia. But he has failed to guarantee legal justice to suspected terrorists, an integral part of any long-term resolution. In Anwar's view Mahathir has also exploited the fear of terrorism for his personal and political gains by portraying the main opposition party, PAS, as sympathetic to suspected terrorist groups. On both accounts Anwar sees Mahathir as a failure in defending the 'true Islam'. From Anwar's point of view, to conform to true Islam, Muslim 'intellectuals and politicians must have the courage to condemn fanaticism in all its forms' but in the same breath they must also 'condemn the oppressive regimes that dash every hope of peaceful change'.⁴⁴

Anwar's position on terrorism and its causes serves two important objectives critical for his political future. His emphasis on the internal causes of Muslim terrorism shifts the blame away from the US. This is a significant move as it makes him a 'moderate' in contrast to the fiery anti-Western rhetoric of Mahathir, and Anwar needs the support of Western agencies to sustain his 'politics behind bars'. In keeping with this objective his moderate position would assure a positive response from the West. Anwar's position has important implications for his role in the Muslim world. His emphasis on 'self-criticism', and the implied need for a return to the essence of Islam, combine to make Anwar a leading Muslim voice for Islamic regeneration and reformation.

Post-September 11 Malaysian Politics: Winners and Losers

Many observers of Malaysian politics have claimed that the biggest beneficiary in Malaysia from the political climate created by September 11 and the war on terror is none other than Mahathir himself. Professor Jomo has described September 11 as one of several 'God-sent' episodes for Mahathir.⁴⁵ Other 'divine gifts' to Mahathir mentioned by Jomo were the nation's strong financial recovery in 1999 and 2000, the rise of Islamic militant movements such as the Al-Ma'unah⁴⁶ and the internal squabbles within the Alternative Front. All these episodes have helped to reverse his declining political fortunes following the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the 1998 sacking of Anwar from the government and UMNO, and UMNO's poor performance in the 1999 general elections. The decline of Mahathir's position prevented him from leaving office because it would have marred his

legacy. He did not wish to be remembered as a weak leader. The September 11 episode helped reverse the decline: Mahathir was able to use these turbulent events to his advantage and bolster his political standing in Malaysia and the rest of the Muslim world. Once this was achieved he was able to leave office from a position of strength.⁴⁷

The threat of Islamic militancy in Malaysia predates September 11, 2001. In July 2000 Malaysia's largest arms heist involved the Al-Ma'unah, while a year later eight people were arrested for membership of the KMM, a secretive organization with alleged links to international terrorism. The government presented both groups as militants with the ultimate objective of imposing their own interpretation of an Islamic state through violence. They were also presented as maintaining links with PAS. Among the arrested KMM members was Nik Adli, a PAS youth leader and son of Nik Aziz, the spiritual leader of PAS. PAS rejected these allegations and confirmed its commitment to the establishment of an Islamic state through democratic and peaceful means.⁴⁸

There was a widespread perception that the arrests were part of Mahathir's orchestrated political plot to stem the growing opposition following the strong showing of PAS at the national polls only months earlier. Eager to dispel that perception, some of Mahathir's non-Malay allies in the ruling coalition joined the opposition in calling for an open trial of those arrested⁴⁹ and for convincing proofs of the existence of the KMM.⁵⁰ The Al-Ma'unah case was ultimately presented in court but not that of the KMM. Following police investigations, detained KMM members have either been released or held under the Internal Security Act, strengthening the critics' suspicion that the arrests were politically motivated. The KMM case met with public skepticism because Malaysians mistrusted Mahathir, who was at his lowest ebb of popularity at the time. Amidst disputes over allegations of religious militancy came September 11, changing the global political climate and thus the course of Mahathir's political fortunes.

In the climate of heightened anxiety about possible extremist and terrorist networks in Malaysia, many Malaysians were prepared to give Mahathir the benefit of the doubt and support his strong stance against alleged terrorists. It seems many voters were also prepared to tolerate his authoritarian rule for the sake of security. The first visible sign of a 'change of heart' in the people's attitude toward Mahathir's National Front was the victory of its candidate in a by-election held only a few months after September 11 with a much greater majority than in the 1999 general elections. Mahathir himself attached much significance to the result by describing it as 'the regaining of the Barisan National's honor'.⁵¹

Ironically, it was his opposition to the war in Afghanistan that helped his political comeback. He exploited to the full the 'strategic errors' of PAS in supporting the Taliban, and the information that linked PAS members to an international terrorist network. He portrayed his political enemies as extremists and himself as a moderate. Analysts and critics acknowledged his success in 're-engineering Malaysian politics' after September 11 to his advantage but warned that his reaping of political benefits from the terrorism and security issue could not be sustained for long.⁵² Mahathir seemed to take heed of the warning. Apparently satisfied he had regained enough credibility and honor as leader to make an exit from power, on 22 June 2002, less than a year after September 11, he unexpectedly announced his resignation from the UMNO presidency in an emotional closing speech at UMNO's general assembly, only to be persuaded by party leaders to continue to lead until October 2003, when Malaysia was scheduled to host the OIC heads of state summit meeting. This offered Mahathir an

honorable and respectable exit from his position of national leadership. His OIC opening speech was widely appreciated in the Muslim world for its frank assessment and treatment of the global Muslim malaise, but strongly criticized in the West. His summit declaration, 'Jews rule the world by proxy',⁵³ guaranteed his grand and well-publicized departure from the political scene.

The reversal of Mahathir's political fortunes in the post-September 11 era was at the expense of PAS. The ruling UMNO and PAS both attempted to exploit the war on terrorism, particularly the attack on Afghanistan. However, the declaration of jihad by PAS to defend the Taliban against the US and its allies made it vulnerable to a massive propaganda attack through the state-controlled media. UMNO accused PAS of being 'Malaysian Taliban' and PAS found it difficult to refute this accusation, especially given its open commitment to the implementation of Islamic law. For example, in the Kelantan and Terengganu provinces, where PAS dominates local government, it has pushed for the supremacy of *hudūd*. These political blunders have been exploited by UMNO in a concerted propaganda campaign against PAS, which has been extremely damaging to the latter. The few by-elections that have been held after September 11 have already pointed to a significant drift of voters back to the ruling party. When general elections were held in March 2004 PAS suffered a humiliating defeat in Terengganu and barely won in Kelantan to retain the state government.

In a sense, Anwar is another big loser in the war on terrorism. Imprisoned in 1999 for fifteen years, Anwar could only lose more by simply being forgotten. His political enemies and Mahathir's hard-core supporters would have preferred it if he had become completely irrelevant and disappeared from the political scene. For Anwar's supporters it is critical to keep the 'Anwar issue' alive. In Malaysia and in many other countries, especially the West, Anwar has not yet been forgotten. However, the war on terrorism has, to a certain extent, eclipsed the Anwar issue. It is against this backdrop that Anwar's contribution may be seen. His essay, 'Who hijacked Islam?', presented a perspective that was distinct from both Mahathir and PAS. This was an opportunity to maintain his relevance to the debate on the war and its conduct in Southeast Asia.

Interestingly, a major consequence of the war on terrorism is the momentum in the direction of experimentation with democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq. As the world debates the future of both democracy and terrorism in the two countries, Anwar's political belief that democracy will be the key to fighting extremism and terrorism in the Muslim world would make him not less but more relevant to contemporary Muslim politics.

In a negative and controversial way, Anwar had also re-emerged in the limelight by being linked to terrorism. There had been attempts to link Anwar and the Free Anwar Campaign to terrorism through his associations with international Muslim organizations that have been subject to US investigation into alleged funding of terrorists. The most recent⁵⁴ and also the most widely reported attempt was an allegation by the executive director of the Washington-based Search for International Terrorist Entities (SITE) during an interview with Australia's Special Broadcasting Service (SBS).⁵⁵ Anwar has dismissed SITE as 'a minor research outfit, which is known to be anti-Islam and has condemned just about every Islamic organization in the US as being involved with terrorism',⁵⁶

Apparently, Anwar's alleged link to terrorism has been inferred largely from his association with the Virginia-based International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), of

which he was one of the directors. The IIIT, an intellectually oriented organization with close links to Muslim leaders like Mahathir and former President Habibie of Indonesia, is best known in the Muslim world for its 'Islamization of knowledge' programs⁵⁷ and has been investigated and cleared of links with terrorist groups. Accusations of a link between Anwar and international terrorism remain unsubstantiated, but they have the potential to damage his political position. Anwar has been actively denying such claims and has tried to chart an independent political course for himself that is not tainted by violence. His article in *Time Asia* was a significant step in that direction. But the long-term implications of the war on terror will depend, to some degree, on how the new prime minister, Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi, handles the Mahathir legacy.

Giving Democracy a Chance to Fight Terrorism

Anwar may be the most well known advocate of Muslim reforms and greater democratization in Malaysia, but he is not the only one. Among prominent leaders of non-governmental organizations who are pro-democracy and human rights, albeit in an Islamic context, are individuals such as Chandra Muzaffar, the president of the International Movement for a Just World (JUST) and Anwar's former ally in Keadilan. Sharing the same pro-democracy sentiments are the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia—ABIM) and the small but highly visible women's group Sisters in Islam. Among political leaders there are many voices from within the ranks of both the opposition and ruling coalition who believe that Malaysia needs more democratization. There is no doubt that many Malaysians hope for improvement in political conditions in the post-September 11 period.

Prime Minister Abdullah offered some hope for a more enlightened democracy in post-Mahathir Malaysia in his maiden speech in Parliament.⁵⁸ According to Abdullah, 'democracy is the best system of governance', and Malaysians must work for a more open society 'to ensure that a culture of democracy thrives'. However, he also spoke of the need to be firm in dealing with 'extremism, terrorism, and militancy'. He seemed to be confident that the pursuit of democracy can be reconciled with a strong stance on terrorism, although he did not explain how the two goals can be realized. Unlike Anwar, Abdullah did not explicitly say democracy was the key to winning the war against extremism and terrorism, although the spirit of his speech suggested a similar conviction. He called for a comprehensive study of the formation of militant groups and why they commit terrorist acts,⁵⁹ thus committing himself to a long-term and less politicized approach to fighting terrorism.

Many welcomed Abdullah's parliamentary speech as encouraging and were further delighted to see the release of nineteen alleged Muslim militants from detention under the Internal Security Act. These included four students from a religious boarding school in Pakistan suspected of having links with the JI.⁶⁰ Even Anwar acknowledged that Abdullah was on the right track, although he also detected conflicting messages, such as Abdullah's assurance that he would not change Mahathir's policies and practices. Many Malaysians believed Abdullah would eventually depart from his predecessor's policies and practices but very few expected this so soon after becoming prime minister, so he surprised many people when after just a few months at the nation's helm he brought corruption charges against a number of prominent citizens including a businessman with close links to Mahathir.

However, with an eye to his political interests, Anwar had been exerting pressure on Abdullah to 'expand the democratic space' and discard the country's oppressive laws, such as the Internal Security Act and the Printing Presses and Publications Act.⁶¹ In Anwar's view, the country needs meaningful democratic reforms, starting with the removal of oppressive laws, and this becomes especially important in view of a general decline of democratic standards in recent years. Anwar became more critical of Abdullah when he was denied bail while awaiting the outcome of an appeal against his conviction for sodomy. He accused Abdullah of hypocrisy in his pledges to combat corruption and foster transparency since the denial of bail clearly showed Abdullah was still unable 'to free himself from Mahathir's grip' and guarantee the independence of the judiciary.⁶² Abdullah, however, rejected Anwar's accusation maintaining that he had met the judiciary to tell them of his respect for their independence.⁶³

Notwithstanding this feud between two long-time political rivals, there is a real possibility that for the first time in the history of modern Malaysia, its citizens will be breathing in a more liberal and democratic space and experiencing a more enlightened democratic pluralism. Although both Abdullah and Anwar appear to be committed to democracy and fighting extremism, an important factor in itself, there remains the issue of whether democracy in Malaysia will be given a real chance to prove its ability to function as the key to fighting extremism and terrorism. Until that chance is offered to Malaysians, the task for Abdullah is to expand the democratic space as Anwar has insisted and to ensure the flourishing of a democratic culture as he promised in his maiden parliamentary speech.

Until his release on 2 September 2004 Anwar had been playing the role of Abdullah's critic from behind bars. His release is perhaps Abdullah's biggest surprise so far for Malaysians. Both Anwar and Abdullah have reason to thank each other. Anwar benefited from Abdullah's commitment to democracy and rule of law. Abdullah was probably aware all along that the progress of democracy in Malaysia, on which his credibility depends, is going to be related by many to the resolution of Anwar's highly politicized imprisonment issue. By simply telling the judiciary to observe its independence Abdullah has helped Anwar's acquittal of the sodomy charge. But Abdullah also gained from Anwar's release. It boosted his image at home and abroad. Moreover, Anwar could be an important ally in fighting corruption and promoting democracy and in helping Malaysia and the world to win the war on terrorism.

Conclusion

With Abdullah distancing himself as prime minister from Mahathir, and Anwar a free man, Malaysia may well be entering a new phase in its war on terrorism. Both Abdullah and Anwar are committed to fighting religious extremism and terrorism, but they are also committed to democracy. If democracy is to be presented as the key to winning the war on religious extremism and terrorism, a position on which they seem to converge, then there is a need to address the issue of the ideological dimension of terrorism and to demonstrate how democracy is most suited to combat fanaticism. However, in order to address that issue a suitable environment should be made available for a free and enlightened discourse on Islam, democracy and terrorism. The democratic reforms in Malaysia, as a predominantly Muslim country, presuppose the compatibility of Islam and democracy and could even suggest Islam as a pillar of political pluralism—a proposition with far-reaching

international relevance. Many believe that, together, Abdullah and Anwar are in a position to help Malaysia move forward in that direction.

Notes

1. Mahathir has been deeply angered by the frequent US post-Bali travel alerts regarding the possibility of terrorist action against Westerners in Southeast Asia. To Mahathir this is 'beyond understanding' since in his perspective the US and its allies, such as Australia, are no safer from terrorists than the Southeast Asian nations. In fact, concerned about the impact of such travel warnings upon regional tourism and foreign investment, Mahathir and his Association of South East Asian Nations counterparts issued a statement calling on the US to 'refrain from issuing warnings against traveling in Southeast Asia' at the 2002 annual summit. This call was rejected by the US, which felt it had a 'responsibility to warn US citizens about potential dangers they may face while abroad'. See *Agence France-Presse* (5 November 2002) and P. Chambers, Malaysia dismisses US warning, sees paranoia, *Washington Post*, 21 November 2002. Interestingly, significant differences exist not only between Western and Southeast Asian governments but also between Western governments and some of their diplomats stationed in the region. On the diversity of opinions see R. Bonner, Travel warnings trouble some envoys in Southeast Asia, *New York Times*, 11 November 2002.
2. Although the Bali bombings claimed the lives of only seven Americans (compared with 88 Australians), three of the main perpetrators, Amrozi bin Nurhasyim, Imam Samudra and Ali Imron, who have been convicted, all claimed their main target was America and its allies in retaliation for the bombing of Afghanistan. This means the Bali bombing is thus far the most violent and destructive response from Muslim militants in Southeast Asia to the war on terrorism.
3. Although leftist opposition to the 'militarization' of the second front in the Philippines was fierce, it did not, contrary to government claims, constitute the only opposition to this development. Even within the US, concerns regarding the legitimacy and need for the second front existed. See N. D. Kristof, The wrong war, *New York Times*, 19 February 2002. For Southeast Asian criticisms see Wrong target, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 April 2002.
4. L. Chin, The United States in the Philippines: post 9/11 imperatives, *Center for Research on Globalization*, 17 July 2002, www.globalresearch.ca/articles/CH1207A.html.
5. In early August 2001 Malaysian police detained ten members of what the authorities call Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (Malaysian Mujahidin Group—KMM), including Nik Adli Nik Aziz, son of the PAS spiritual leader who has been the chief minister of Kelantan for the last fifteen years. This occurred before the events of September 11, 2001; the rationale given for the arrest was that these men had 'received jihad or military training in Afghanistan'. These arrests received front page coverage in all Malaysian newspapers.
6. Malaysia's progress report on its war on al-Qa'ida less than two years later testifies both to the existence of a more serious threat from Muslim extremists than previously thought and to the success of the government in combating this threat. In a detailed report delivered at the US and Malaysian co-chaired conference of the region's top security group, the Association of South East Asian Nations Regional Forum, the Malaysian government gave the number of suspected militants detained as 90, including 65 JI members. This conference was held on 21–22 March 2003 in the Malaysian state of Sabah, which neighbors Abu Sayyaf's island base in the southern Philippines. See: Government says JI terror threat under control, www.malaysiakini.com (21 March 2003).
7. The Singapore government made arrests in December 2001. However, these were only announced on 5 January 2002. For details, see, for example, S. Mydans, Singapore accuses Islamists of bomb plan, *New York Times*, 6 January 2002. The number of accused militants detained without trial is now 37, most of them alleged members of JI. The government claims that with these arrests the local chapter of JI has been eliminated. See: Singapore winning battle against JI but critics lash out at detention laws, www.afp.com (15 January 2002).
8. On JI's regional network, see the International Crisis Group's publication, *Indonesia Background: How the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist Network Operates*, Asia Report No. 43 (11 December 2002), www.crisisweb.org; R. Gunaratna, *Inside al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 174–203; Z. Abuza, *Militant Islam in Southeast Asia* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003).

9. The Philippines government bars foreign troops from operating in the country unless under a treaty. With critics pointing to the unconstitutionality of the American presence, the government was forced to formulate terms of agreement for the deployment of American troops. See the full text of the *Terms of Reference for the Republic of the Philippines–US Exercise BALIKATAN 02-1* signed on 7 February 2002.
10. On Mahathir's ideological position on global terrorism see his *Terrorism and the Real Issues* (Subang Jaya: Pelanduk Publications, 2003).
11. US investigators believe Yazid Sufaat, a graduate in biochemistry from California State University, had hosted two of the hijackers involved in the attacks of September 11 when they visited Kuala Lumpur in 2000. Sufaat is also claimed to be the paymaster of Zacarias Moussaoui, a Frenchman who is now on trial in the US for his alleged involvement in September 11. However, Sufaat has denied these allegations, admitting only a 'peripheral role' in the al-Qa'ida network. See B. Pereira, Detained Malaysian denies paying for Sept 11 attacks, *Straits Times Interactive* (1 February 2002). The US plan for Sufaat's extradition was thwarted by Malaysia's move to have him detained under the Internal Security Act, which does not allow an open trial. See *The Sunday Times*, 3 February 2002.
12. Mahathir has taken up the theme of the US mishandling of the war on terrorism and its global impact in his addresses at various international forums. See Mahathir Mohamad, *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, particularly chapter 10, which contains the text of his speech delivered at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on 24 January 2003.
13. See L. Barlett, Clash of civilizations looms between Islam and the West: Mahathir, www.malaysiakini.com (20 July 2003); Mahathir Mohamad, *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, p. 108, where he asserts that 'about 1.3 billion Muslims were identified as the potential enemy' who have to be 'harassed, restrained and detained indiscriminately'.
14. Malaysian foreign minister Syed Hamid Albar said it was 'insufficient for US President George Bush to just verbally rebuke prominent Christians over their anti-Islamic rhetoric' but that his government must 'put them in prison the same way it is demanding all of us to act against extremist elements which oppose (US) interests around the world'. In Malaysia's view, 'these anti-Islamic extremists pose just as much threat to global security as any terrorist group because their lies about Islam could fan more hatred which could spark violence and atrocities against the innocent.' See *New Strait Times*, 16 November 2002.
15. On 8 May 2002 Mahathir, as president of UMNO, and the late Fadzil Noor, then president of PAS, signed a memorandum outlining their common political stand in a special gathering dubbed 'The PAS–UMNO Inaugural Lecture Assembly'. The gathering was co-organized by the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia and the Language and Literary Agency.
16. On Mahathir's speech at that conference see his *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, chapter 5. His definition of terrorism is given on p. 64.
17. See, for example, *What the World Thinks in 2002* and *Views of a Changing World* (2003) released by the Pew Research Center of the People and the Press, Washington, DC; also Gallup Poll Editors, *2002 Gallup Poll of the Islamic World* (New York: Gallup Press, 2002).
18. A commentary on the report states, 'In 2002, in a survey of 38,000 people in 44 countries, the Pew Research Center found that US global image had slipped. But when we went back this spring after the war in Iraq—conducting another 16,000 interviews in 20 countries—it was clear that favorable opinions of the US had plummeted.' See A. Kohut, *Anti-Americanism: Causes and Characteristics*, Pew Research Center (10 December 2003).
19. See S. Mahavera, Comment: love–hate relationship with America, *New Straits Times* (14 June 2003), based on discussions with Malaysian Muslim leaders.
20. *Ibid.*
21. See: Bush tells Asian leaders: save the civilized world, *Associated Press* (21 October 2001).
22. Marc Herold, a US economics professor at the University of New Hampshire, claimed in an independent study on civilian casualties in the early stages of the war in Afghanistan that 'between October 7 and December 6, US aerial attacks on Afghanistan had killed an average of 62 civilians a day'. See his An average day in Afghanistan, www.pubpages.unh.edu/~mwherold (29 December 2001). Herold's 40 case studies of civilian deaths in the Afghan conflict since 2001 are published as *Blown Away: the Myth and Reality of Precision Bombing in Afghanistan* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2004).
23. See: Bush more rational now, says Mahathir, *Bernama* (8 October 2001).
24. The 16 November 2001 speech has been published in Mahathir Mohamad, *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, chapter 2. On Mahathir equating the US 'retaliation' against the Taliban with the events of September 11, see p. 32.

25. '... the killing of the Afghans and the destruction of the country is likely to anger a lot of Muslims. Their governments may not, though it is very likely that they too could be angered by wanton acts against a brother Muslim country. But certainly the vast majority of Muslims in whichever country are going to get very angry. And of the many millions of angry Muslims there would be quite a few who would join the ranks of the terrorists and be willing to die to avenge what to them is a gross injustice and cruelty' (Mahathir Mohamad, *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, p. 34).
26. See the party's online paper www.harakahdaily.net (8 October 2001). Supporting the party's call for jihad, its youth leader Mahfuz Omar called on Mahathir 'to provide military aid to the Taliban' and on the OIC 'to mobilize member states to fight against the US', which must be declared 'a terrorist state and the number one enemy of Islam'. See: Mahfuz wants government to provide military aid to Taliban, www.malaysiakini.com (11 October 2001).
27. See: Malaysia battles anti-US protest, Mahathir says stop bombing Afghans, www.islam-online.net (12 October 2001).
28. See: Anti-US protests worldwide, www.guardian.co.uk/waronterror/story (13 October 2001); A. Ranawana, The Malay dilemma: the US strikes are polarizing Malaysia, www.asiaweek.com (26 October 2001); and: Malaysia battles anti-US protest, www.islam-online.net (12 October 2001).
29. I. Hashim, Demonstrasi anti-Amerika: 5 ditahan di Kedah, www.harakahdaily.com (9 October 2001).
30. See media statement of DAP's leader Lim Kit Siang, US—cease air strikes in Afghanistan!, www.dapmalaysia.org (9 October 2001). As the aerial bombings dragged on claiming more 'collateral damage', Kit Siang issued more media statements critical of the US. For these see above cited website.
31. This attitude may be best illustrated by Keadilan's congratulatory message to Hamid Karzai on his appointment as the head of the interim government of Afghanistan. See Keadilan's media release in www.pemuda-keadilan.org (26 December 2001).
32. See Lim Kit Siang, US air strikes in Afghanistan—shame on parliament, www.dapmalaysia.org (2 November 2001).
33. A senior minister in Mahathir's cabinet, Rais Yatim, said that the US should be brought to the International Court of Justice to face charges of 'causing the death of innocent people in its war against the Taliban'. See *New Straits Times* (29 October 2001). See also Lim Kit Siang, US air strikes in Afghanistan—illegal war against international law?, www.dapmalaysia.org (30 October 2001).
34. On the various Malaysian humanitarian missions to Afghanistan, especially the government sponsored ones, see www.mercy.org.my.
35. Anwar Ibrahim, Who hijacked Islam?, *Time Asia*, 158:15 (15 October 2001). This article has also been published in *New Perspective Quarterly*, 19:1 (2002). Anwar wrote this article in his prison cell in Sungei Buluh near Kuala Lumpur where he served six years of his fifteen-year sentence before being released on 2 September 2004 upon his acquittal of sodomy charges by the Federal Court. Anwar has claimed Mahathir fabricated these charges.
36. The sole legitimate Muslim grievance against the US mentioned in the article is the long-standing issue of the 'fate of the Palestinian people' at the hands of an 'ever more arrogant Israel' backed with the unfaltering support of the US, an alliance which can only anger and baffle the Muslim world.
37. Anwar Ibrahim, Who hijacked Islam?
38. This point is particularly significant considering Anwar's status as a former government leader and a political celebrity in the Muslim world. See, for example, commentary by Z. Sardar, Islam has become its own worst enemy: Muslims in denial, www.observer.co.uk/comment/story/00.6903.577787.00.html (21 October 2001).
39. Anwar is not alone in seeing Mahathir's clever exploitation of the issue of terrorism to 'improve his political credentials at home and abroad', especially in his determination to link PAS to the Taliban and the KMM. See M. Richardson, Mahathir boosted by terrorism stance, www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/southeast/10/31/malaysia.mahathir (31 October 2001).
40. Mahathir Mohamad, *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, p. 35.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
42. Here Mahathir is rebutting a claim made by President Bush and his administration that the terrorist attack of September 11 was the work of people who hated America because of its freedom and prosperity.
43. Mahathir Mohamad, *Terrorism and the Real Issues*, p. 37.
44. Anwar Ibrahim, Who hijacked Islam?

45. S. Loone, God-sent episodes strengthened Dr Mahathir's position, www.malaysiakini.com (1 August 2002).
46. In July 2002, Al-Ma'unah, a martial arts sect, was accused of attempting to set up an Islamic state by toppling Mahathir's government by force. A High Court trial found nineteen of its members guilty of treason and sentenced three to death and sixteen to life imprisonment (www.malaysiakini.com, 28 December 2001).
47. Mahathir announced his decision to step down from office on 22 June 2002 at the end of UMNO's General Assembly. However, he only relinquished all his posts in the government and the party on 31 October 2003 after the conclusion of the OIC summit.
48. S. Loone, We reject taking up arms: Nik Aziz, www.malaysiakini.com (8 March 2002).
49. Tong Yee Siong, Charge KMM detainees in court: Gerakan leader, www.malaysiakini.com (20 August 2001).
50. In the words of Lim Kit Siang, two days after the KMM arrests, 'the government's first and urgent duty is to prove the existence of KMM . . . and convince Malaysians that (this) is not another ploy against the opposition'. See www.dapmalaysia.org (20 August 2001).
51. See: BN retains Indera Kayangan, larger majority, www.malaysiakini.com (19 January 2001).
52. See: Mahathir more firmly in control after Sept 11: Singapore analyst, www.malaysiakini.com (20 August 2002).
53. In response to the international outrage over his remarks about Jews, Mahathir said his comments had been taken out of context and his speech was also critical of Muslims for failing to stop violence in their own countries. See Mahathir's defense of his OIC speech at a news conference on the eve of his retirement in M. Jegathesan, Mahathir says he empathizes with Jews on eve of retirement, www.malaysiakini.com (30 October 2003).
54. An earlier attempt was when Malaysian newspapers reported a claim made by the Supreme Islamic Council of America chairman Shaykh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani during one of his visits to Malaysia. Kabbani claimed to have revealed a US\$10 million contribution to radical Muslim organizations by a Malaysian ex-minister. Although Kabbani did not mention the ex-minister by name, many understood the reference as being to Anwar. See: Government will name former minister at the right time: Khalil, www.malaysiakini.com (18 February 2002). This report created significant controversy among opposition leaders, including Anwar's wife calling on Abdullah Badawi, then deputy prime minister, to substantiate the allegation. At this point Kabbani denied making the claim.
55. An SBS *Dateline* report that contained allegations of Anwar's link to terrorism, including an interview with SITE's director Rita Katz, was aired on 22 October 2003. See: Aussie report is slanderous, says Wan Azizah, and also: Free Anwar campaign refutes terror link alleged in SBS report, www.malaysiakini.com (25 October 2003).
56. See Yoon Szu-Mae, Anwar looking on legal action against media over accusations, www.malaysiakini.com (27 October 2003).
57. For an objective and sympathetic study of IIIT's Islamization of knowledge programs by a Western scholar, see L. Stenberg, *The Islamization of Science: Four Muslim Positions, Developing an Islamic Modernity* (Lund: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1996).
58. See: Pak Lah pledges democracy in maiden parliamentary speech, www.malaysiakini.com (3 November 2003).
59. See: Pak Lah orders study on terrorists, www.malaysiakini.com (6 November 2003).
60. See: Yap Mun Ching, 10 alleged militants released from ISA detention, www.malaysiakini.com (25 November 2003).
61. Anwar Ibrahim, No need for Pak Lah to wait 100 days, www.malaysiakini.com (5 November 2003).
62. See: M. Jegathesan, Drama in court following judgment, www.malaysiakini.com (21 January 2004).
63. See: PM defends judiciary after Anwar outburst, www.malaysiakini.com (27 January 2004).