

Where is our Mahathir?

g. Bidwai
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Mahathir's anti-Semitic remarks shouldn't obscure the main thrust of his OIC speech: a passionate appeal to Muslims to embrace reform and modernity. India's Hindus need their own Mahathir

DURING HIS latest Asia visit, reports *The New York Times*, a shaken George W. Bush confronted his staff with "a puzzled look on his face". "Do they really believe that we think all Muslims are terrorists?" he asked. Among 'them' was Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who retires today.

Mahathir delivered a controversial address at the Organisation of Islamic Conference summit. When I first read headlines pertaining to it, I was appalled at the blatantly anti-Semitic tone of some comments about "arrogant" Jews: "The Europeans killed six million Jews out of 12 million. But today the Jews rule the world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them."

Perhaps the most vicious and ill-informed comment was that the Jews "invented socialism, communism, human rights and democracy" so their persecution would appear wrong and they'd have equal rights. Democracy, socialism and communism weren't invented by a few individuals; they are products of historic struggles and great social movements born in the womb of modernity itself.

Mahathir was wrong to equate Jews and Jewishness with Zionism, and exaggerate the 'Jewish' roots of Washington's deeply deplorable support for Israel's anti-Palestinian policies. The roots are less ethno-religious than political, although Zionism's influence in global financial and media institutions shouldn't be underestimated.

I wrote angrily against Mahathir's anti-Semitic remarks. But upon carefully reading the text of his speech, I realise this was just one small part of what he said. His real thrust lay elsewhere: in opposing fanaticism and *jehadi* violence, and pleading for a moderate, liberal, forward-looking Islam.

In places, Mahathir actually lavished praise upon the Jewish community for surviving "2,000 years of pogroms" by adopting a modern, scientific outlook — by "thinking", not just "hitting back". Mahathir vented the frustration that millions of Muslims the world over feel as a result of a long, messy history of colonisation, destabilisation of West Asia, and successive defeats inflicted by Israel upon the Arab States: "We are all Muslims. We are all oppressed. We are all being humiliated."

However, Mahathir argued explicitly against paranoia and blind anger: "Angry people cannot think properly. And so we find some of our people reacting irrationally. They launch their own attacks, killing just about anybody including fellow Muslims to vent their anger... Every at-

tempt at a peaceful solution is sabotaged... But the attacks solve nothing. The Muslims simply get more oppressed."

Mahathir unequivocally condemned 'Islamist' violence and attacks against innocent non-Muslims: these "are doing Muslims no good. They are simply playing into the hands of their [Israeli and western] enemies". He counselled negotiation and restraint: "We also know that not all non-Muslims are against us. Even among the Jews there are many who don't approve of what the Israelis are doing. We must not antagonise everyone."

A 'thoughtful', patient strategy alone can redress the Muslim world's grievances, Mahathir said: "Pausing and thinking calmly is not a waste of time. We have a need to make a strategic retreat and to calmly assess our situation." He cited anecdotes from Prophet Mohammed's life to argue against blind 'revenge' and for sanity.

Depending on one's own religious preferences, one may or may not empathise with this religious *ummah*-based reasoning. But this is undeniably a passionate plea for reform, moderation, modernity and logical thinking — of a kind that's rarely heard in the Islamic world. Mahathir's own credentials in this regard are impeccable.

His entire 22-year-long political career has centred on opposing Malaysia's Islamic extremists and building a plural society with Malays, Chinese and Indians coexisting, and with a level of prosperity unequalled in most of the Third World, leave alone India.

Do we hear the equivalent of Mahathir's voice in India? We do — but frankly, more from Muslims, Buddhists, Christians and agnostics-

atheists than from practising, believing Hindus. The Hindu-reformist momentum, which gathered force particularly in our coastal states in the 19th century, ran out with Gandhiji's assassination. Hindu India had no place even for Ambedkar.

Today, those who claim to speak for India's Hindus are counter-reformist, viscerally anti-modernist and politically extremist. To them, the idea of India as a plural, multi-cultural, multi-religious society reeks of 'pseudo-secularism'. They preach revenge — against "aggressors", imagined "defilers" of *Bharat Mata*, against mosques, against history itself.

Nothing could be more retrograde for this society or for Hinduism. Many Indian Hindus solely need their Mahathir. He's nowhere in sight — certainly not in the BJP.



SERMON FROM THE FRONT:
Mahathir Mohamad

Muslim nations urge US eviction from Iraq

Saddam notes burned

Putrajaya (Malaysia), Oct. 11 (Reuters): Muslim nations demanded "eviction of all foreign forces from Iraq" as they began a summit in Malaysia today, with only Turkey defending plans to deploy its troops alongside the US-led alliance.

They also voiced support for Syria after an Israeli air raid last weekend stoked fears of escalating conflict in West Asia.

Abdelouahed Belkeziz, secretary-general of the 57-member Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), said occupying forces should quickly withdraw from Iraq to give the UN a chance to reconstruct the country.

"Foremost of these is the eviction of foreign forces from Iraq, allowing the UN to administer Iraqi affairs," Belkeziz said in his opening address.

The OIC summit, being held in Malaysia's new administrative capital of Putrajaya, began with meetings of senior officials. Foreign ministers will meet on Monday and the leaders' summit takes place on October 16-17.

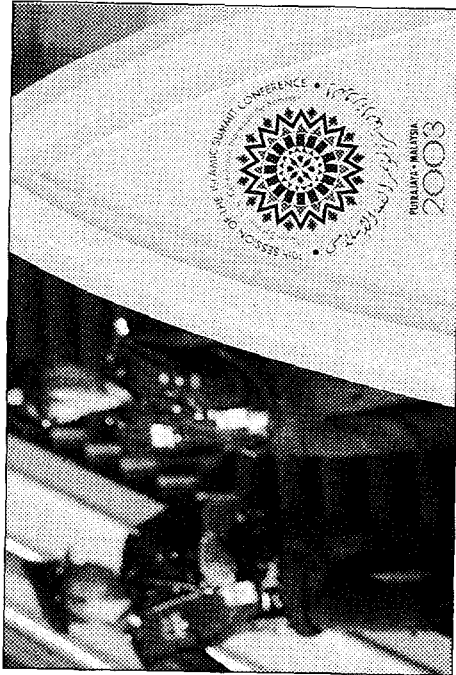
Up to 35 heads of state are expected to attend the OIC summit in what will be the largest gathering of Muslim leaders since the attacks on the US on September 11, 2001.

UN secretary general Kofi Annan is also scheduled to attend, along with non-members Russian President Vladimir Putin and Philippines President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who both rule over large, rebellious Muslim minorities.

Belkeziz, a Moroccan, said the summit should address concerns arising from terrorism, globalisation and "campaigns against Islam, Muslims and human rights".

He also condemned Israel for what he said was failing to live up to peace process commitments and said the OIC supported the Palestinian and Iraqi peoples and Iranian and Syrian governments against "aggression".

But veteran Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad,



Malaysian policemen on guard at the Organisation of Islamic Conference meeting in Putrajaya, Malaysia. (AFP)

When later asked by Reuters whether troops would definitely not be deployed in the Kurdish north, where Turkey is regarded with deep suspicion, Burcuoglu said: "No. We already have troops there, we will not be sending any more."

hosting the summit before his re-
tirement on October 31, said the
OIC would have little influence
as long as US politicians sup-
ported Israel.

"We can go to war, but we have no capacity to go to war. That's the problem. We (Muslims) have allowed ourselves to become weak. People bully us," Mahathir said.

Turkey isolated

The opposition to the US-led occupation of Iraq left neighbouring Turkey isolated.

The lead delegate from Turkey's team of senior officials said although Ankara would have liked a UN mandate to help restore order in neighbouring Iraq, it was more important to act. "We decided to do something. Of course, it is easy for us to stay away, to criticise, to say that the occupation should end," Tahsin Burcuoglu said.

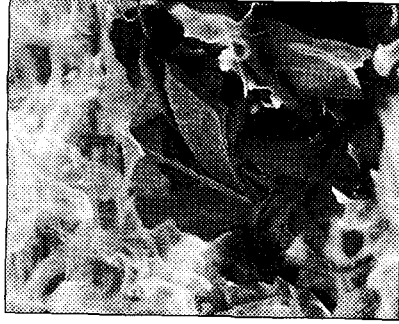
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Baghdad, Oct. 11 (Reuters): Iraq's central bank fired up its furnace today and consigned thousands of banknotes bearing the smiling face of Saddam Hussein to the flames ahead of a massive currency swap to start next week.

Deputy Central Bank governor Ahmed Salman Mohammed said the central bank had already absorbed a "good portion" of Saddam banknotes still in circulation and would carry on with the systematic destruction in coming weeks.

Iraqis have three months from October 15 to swap the estimated four trillion dinars of Saddam bank notes in circulation for new bills bearing pictures of an ancient Babylonian ruler and a 10th century Iraqi mathematician. The Iraqi dinar is worth about 2,000 to the dollar.

"I am optimistic it will go well," Mohammed said in the lobby of the Iraq central bank where tellers counted tall dinar stacks. "Most of it (the currency



A pile of old Iraqi 10,000 dinar notes burn in a Central Bank furnace in Baghdad. (Reuters)

swap) could be over in one month."

The US-led administration in Iraq has ordered all images of Saddam to be removed from monuments, murals and school textbooks. But in the months following the war it was forced to print billions of dinars of ban-

knets bearing the face of Saddam to ease a shortage of low-denomination banknotes.

Several floors below the central bank lobby in a furnace room opposite the vast doors of one of the vaults, workers threw bundles of Saddam bills into the fire and raked the flaming notes deeper into the inferno.

Adnan Chalabi, manager of the furnaces, said about half-a-billion to one billion dinars could be in the furnace. Currency is burned weekly by the central bank, he said.

Tikrit raid

US troops hunting Iraqi guerrillas raided houses in Saddam Hussein's hometown today, arresting four men including two who officers said were former members of the fugitive dictator's security force.

In Baghdad, the president of the governing council said it was still locked in dispute with Washington over controversial plans to deploy Turkish troops in Iraq.

Jolaw **Cry freedom** 5-8
But Lawal's acquittal raises larger issues 29/10

Good sense has prevailed in Nigeria where an Islamic court freed Amina Lawal, who had earlier been sentenced to die by stoning for a "crime" which in most societies would not have incurred any penalty at all: having a child out of wedlock. Her case had become a *cause celebre* among women's organisations and human rights groups all over the world, whose pressure must have had something to do with the final verdict. Credit must also go to her lawyer Hauwa Ibrahim, who defended a poor woman unable to pay any legal fees. The judgement, however, raises some larger questions, as Lawal was acquitted on a technicality, but the issue of the applicability of sharia codes on Nigerian citizens remains. Lawal had a daughter two years after she was divorced from her husband, and an obscure notion supposedly of Islamic provenance, that an embryo can remain in the womb for up to five years since conception, was cited to argue that the child could have been her ex-husband's, thus giving her the benefit of the doubt.

The basic problem is that 12 out of Nigeria's 36 states have adopted harsh Islamic codes and Christian president Olusegun Obasanjo has not so far attempted to challenge them. The imposition of sharia has led to Muslim-Christian riots, and drawn withering criticism from human rights groups. There could well be an Amina Lawal reprise, and next time the sharia courts may not buy the five year conception-to-birth argument. But if their jurisdiction becomes widespread and stoning sentences are actually carried out, that would have catastrophic consequences not just for Nigeria. In many Muslim countries, the argument will be that if a country of many cultures, like Nigeria, can adopt sharia, it is high time Muslim countries did so as well. All the more reason for governments and international organisations to impress on Lagos that if at all sharia is adopted in Nigeria's northern provinces, something ought to be done to make it compatible with modern human rights standards.

THE STATESMAN

3 OCT 2003

3 OCT 2003

Nasarullah Khan passes

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PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, Sept. 27. — Nawabzada Nasurullah Khan, who rallied the divided mainstream political parties under the banner of Alliance for Restoration of Democracy to oppose the military rule of Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf, died today.

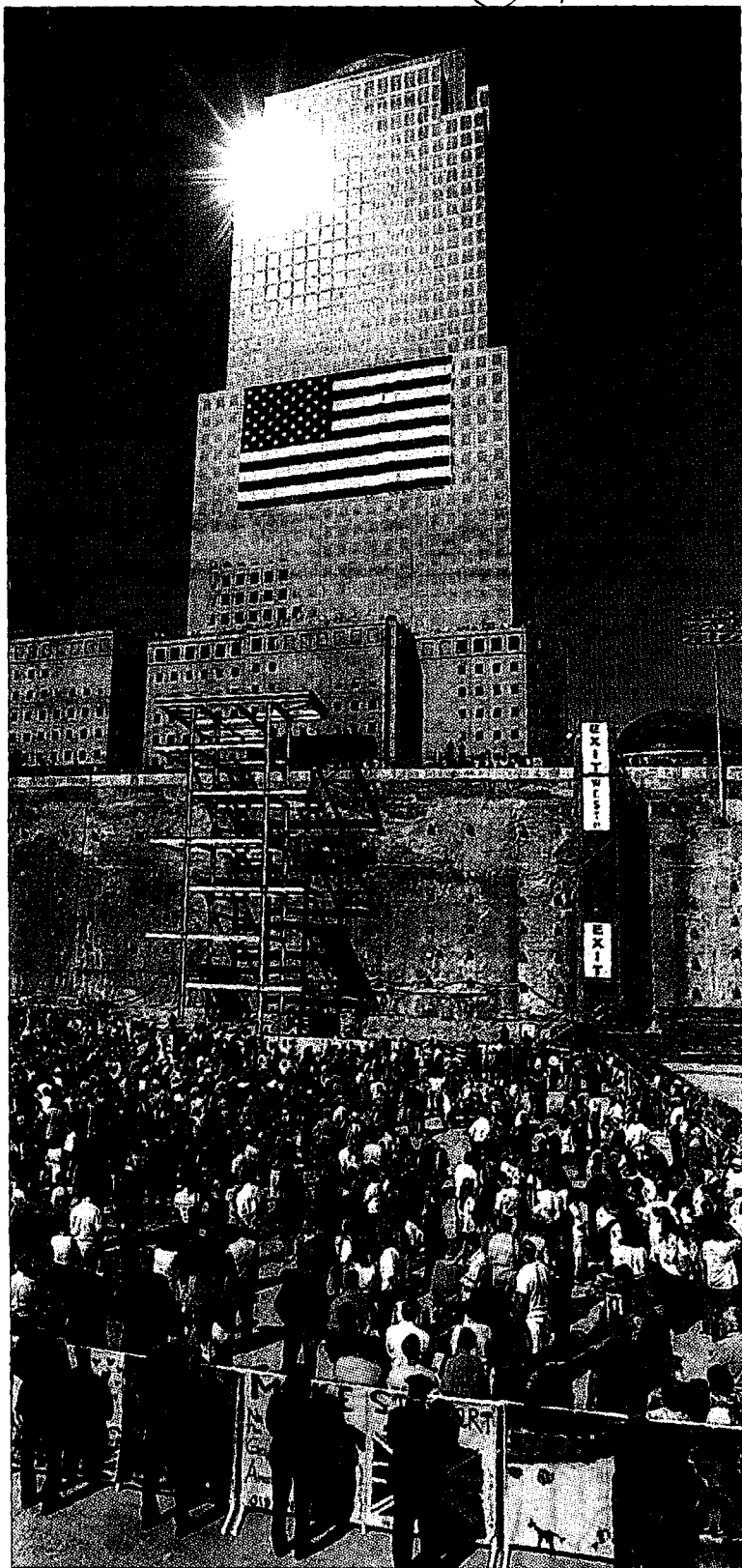
Khan, who headed the 15 party ARD against the continuation of Musharraf's rule breathed his last at a private hospital. He was 85. The veteran politician had the image of a crusader for his prolonged battles against the military rulers like Ayub Khan, Thikka Khan, Zia ul Haq as well as the dictatorial policies of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. He had a political career spanning over seven decades starting from independence movement against British rule.

After the ouster of Sharif regime in a military coup by Musharraf in 1998, Khan brought Bhutto and Sharif under the same umbrella and formed ARD and carried on by putting up stiff resistance to the military rule. Despite his failing health, Khan went to Jeddah and Dubai recently to hold talks with Sharif and Bhutto and urged them to end their exile and return to Pakistan together to step up the agitation against Musharraf.

His death is seen as a major setback to the beleaguered Opposition. Khan was also deeply respected by Muthahida Majlis Amal, which also joined the Opposition to fight against Musharraf's rule. His death was mourned by General Musharraf, Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali and leaders of various political parties.

Topple Pervez: Al-Qaida

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REUTERS

RELIVING THE NIGHTMARE: Family members of 9/11 victims observe silence during the commemoration of the terror strikes at Ground Zero on Thursday.

Pak President has sold out to US, says Osama deputy

Agencies

Washington/Islamabad, September 11

OSAMA BIN Laden and his second in command in the Al-Qaida, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, appeared in a videotape broadcast on Wednesday by the satellite television channel Al-Jazeera. In an accompanying audiotape Zawahiri urged "all Muslims in Pakistan" to rise against "traitor" Pervez Musharraf and to protect their country from the American "crusade allied with the Hindus".

American intelligence said the tapes appeared genuine, but they were analysing the voices and imagery for authenticity.

Zawahiri's message was a litany of accusations against Musharraf. It said he had sold the blood of Muslims and handed Afghanistan to America. The Pak President helped install a puppet government in Kabul and brought Indians to Pakistan's borders. "Not only this", the message went on, Musharraf had also "opened up nuclear installations to US inspection, choked off the jihad in Kashmir and is (planning) to recognise Israel — all for a handful of dollars the Americans stack in his pocket."

The videotape showed bin Laden and Zawahiri, dressed in Afghan clothing, leisurely walking along steep and rocky trails. At one point, bin Laden was shown carrying an AK-47 assault rifle.

The tapes, broadcast on the eve of the second anniversary of 9/11, provided at least the suggestion that the two Al-Qaida leaders are still alive.

The tapes have caused ripples in Pakistan. In an interactive programme on the BBC website, Musharraf said far from being a traitor, he was doing his best to fight terrorism. He wanted Muslims to adopt a path of "moderate emancipation". Musharraf said his government was cracking down on religious schools that are suspected to be breeding grounds for militancy.

'Osama alive, may be in Pak': The Pakistani President also said Osama might be hiding somewhere in the NWFP region of Pakistan and warned that he could attack again.

12 SEP 2003

REUTERS

Islamist group takes blame for UN blast

Dubai/Washington, August 21

A PREVIOUSLY unknown Iraqi group claimed responsibility for the attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad this week, an Arabic television channel said on Thursday.

Dubai-based Al Arabiya said it received a statement claiming responsibility from an Iraqi Islamist group calling itself the Armed Vanguard of the Second Mohammed Army.

"The statement promised to make war on all foreigners and do similar acts," the station, showing a picture of the statement in Arabic, said. "It warned Arab countries against sending armed forces to Iraq and called for continuing what it called acts of jihad against all those who help the Americans, even if they are Arab or Muslim," the station said.

Death toll 23

In Baghdad, rescuers hauled more bodies from the ruins of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, raising to 23 the number killed in a devastating truck bomb attack.

UN spokesman Salim Lone said 23 people were confirmed dead and at least one still unaccounted for. "We hope until the bitter end to find someone, but it does not look good at this stage," Lone said. More than 100 rescue workers and US soldiers picked through the rubble, but said there was little hope of finding any more survivors from Tuesday's suspected bombing.

Asked how long people buried in the rubble could have stayed

alive, US official David Roath told reporters at the scene: "In this heat, not very long."

UN spokesman Fred Eckhard said the agency is looking for alternative space in Iraq since the facility is unusable.

The United Nations will resume operations in Iraq on Saturday, a top official said. Annan has vowed the UN will stay in Iraq and continue its work despite the bombing.

But the UN office in Jordan said a "partial evacuation" was under way. Planes carrying wounded UN staff and others who chose to leave have been arriving in Amman. Many more are expected over the next few days.

Lone said those who wanted to leave could go and the wounded were also being flown out, but many staff had decided they wanted to stay in the country.

"I am staying. I will not leave. We owe it to the Iraqi people to stay here and carry on with our work," United Nations spokeswoman Veronique Taveau said.

World Bank, IMF pull out

The bombing dealt a huge blow to efforts to rebuild Iraq. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund, which had been leading efforts to draw up a survey of Iraq's needs ahead of a donors' conference in Spain in October, said they were pulling out staff and it was too early to say when they would return.

Officials have said pledges of more than \$5 billion will be needed to keep the floundering economy afloat in 2004.

Agencies

Pak Islamists seek fatwa over sending troops

Islamabad, Aug. 9 (Reuters): Pakistan's headline Islamic groups, locked in a bitter standoff with the pro-military government, said today they would seek a fatwa or religious decree against dispatching Pakistani troops to Iraq.

Pakistan, a key ally in what Washington calls its "war on terror", has been asked by the US to send around 10,000 soldiers to Iraq to help secure the post-war peace.

Fazal-ur-Rehman, a central leader of the main anti-US Islamic alliance, said a council of top religious scholars had been set up to issue the fatwa next week. "A council has been formed to issue a fatwa that serving of Muslim troops under the command of the US is un-Islamic," he told a news conference.

"The military rulers have no constitutional, religious and legal right to send troops to Iraq," Islamabad, which backed the US in its war against the Taliban in Afghanistan, says it has agreed in principle to send troops to Iraq. But military President Pervez Musharraf said last month he would prefer his troops to serve under the auspices of the UN or the Organisation of Islamic Conference. "We condemn the government's decision to send troops to Iraq," Rehman said.

The condemnation by the radical Islamic coalition came as a senior British government minister was quoted today as saying that Britain wanted to make it easier for countries including India, Pakistan and Turkey to join a UN-backed multilateral peacekeeping force.

International development

International development

UK forces quell Basra disturbances

Basra, Aug. 9 (Reuters): British troops in riot gear deployed in Basra today to quell spreading disturbances sparked by shortages of fuel and power in Iraq's second city.

In one instance, witnesses said soldiers fired in the air to keep back a crowd at a petrol station. Another witness said the British fired baton rounds at a crowd, wounding two Iraqis. A British military spokesman said several soldiers received minor injuries from stones and a military vehicle was set alight. He had no information on Iraqi injuries or casualties. "We put crowd control measures in place at petrol stations to try to restore law and order," spokesman Jonathan Spencer said.

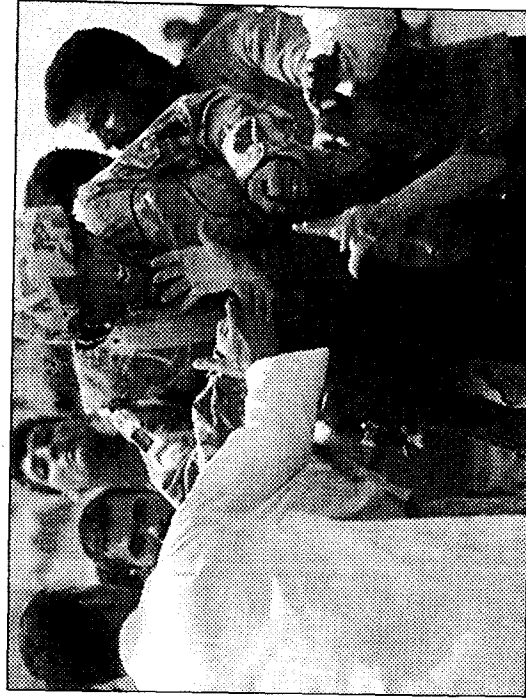
It was the second major unrest against British troops in the past three months. In June, six British soldiers were killed in the Shia town of Majjar by armed Iraqis protesting against searches.

Secretary Baroness Valerie Amos told the *Daily Telegraph* that the US and Britain were ready to support a new UN resolution that would give these countries the domestic cover they needed to contribute troops.

Hardline Muslim groups that made stunning gains in last October elections by tapping anti-American sentiments over the US-led war in neighbouring Afghanistan strongly oppose Musharraf's close ties with the US.

The Islamists are also locked in a long-running standoff with Musharraf over the military's dominant role in politics.

They want him to step down as chief of army staff or as president and withdraw controversial constitutional amendments.



A British soldier grabs a youth during clashes in Basra. (AFP)

Islam no hurdle to E.U. membership: Turkey

By Batuk Gathani

BRUSSELS, Aug. 3. Turkey's Minister for Religious Affairs, Mohamet Aydin, has said that the nation's Islamic character should not be a reason for preventing it from joining the European Union. Currently, 98 per cent of the 65-million people of the country are Muslim.

If Turkey joins the E.U., it will be the largest Muslim country in the predominantly Christian European Union, which currently has an indigenous and migrant Muslim population of 25 millions.

The E.U., which will be expanded to 25 members in 2004, will have a population of 500 millions. With Turkey becoming a member, its Muslim population will go

up to 90 millions, constituting 18 per cent of the total population.

However, all this is an academic exercise, as the prospects of Turkey joining the E.U. appear remote at this stage, although it applied for the membership of the Union over two decades ago. The current Chairman of the European Convention, Giscard d'Estaing, triggered a major controversy early this year when he stated that Turkey did not qualify to join the E.U., not because of Islam but because that country was not the traditional inheritor of Europe's cultural, moral and political values.

The current pro-Islamist Government in Turkey has initiated "a revolution of sorts" by taming the country's secularist military Generals and initiating political

reforms to give more credibility to its quest for full membership of the Union.

On Thursday, Mr Aydin said the repressive policies in some countries against women were a misinterpretation of Islam and launched a scathing attack on the treatment of women in Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan.

He said these three countries could not be considered religious states. "If you do not have a clear vision of equality among humans, that means you do not have a clear vision of religion."

I am ashamed to hear about a debate in Saudi Arabia, about whether women should be allowed to drive cars. This belongs to another age.

Mr Aydin said he may soon appoint a woman as deputy 'mufti', director of re-

ligious affairs in Istanbul, and women would be encouraged to pray in all parts of mosques, rather than confine to them to separate sections.

The Government placed two reformist bills in Parliament this week, aimed at clipping the wings of the powerful military establishment.

The military, which regards itself as the custodian and protector of Turkey's secular legacy, staged the last coup to topple an elected pro-Islamist government.

The Prime Minister, Recep Erdogan's Islamist party, which came to power two years ago, maintains a love-hate relationship with the military but has initiated reforms, ostensibly to boost the country's prospects of joining the E.U.

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Washington keeping tabs on Islamic group

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JULY 15. Intelligence and law enforcement agencies of the U.S. are keeping a watchful eye on the Tablighi Jamaat, an Islamic missionary group that was founded in India more than seven decades ago, according to a media report.

Given the conservative orientation of the group, Federal investigators suspect that the terrorist outfit Al-Qaeda had used the group to recruit members, an allegation that is rejected by leaders of the missionary group. "... Since the attack of September 11, 2001, Tablighi Jamaat, once little known outside Muslim countries, has increasingly attracted the interest of Federal investigators, cropping up on the margins of at least high profile terrorism cases", says a report in *The New York Times*.

The cases include that of John Walker Lindh, now serving time for aiding the Taliban in Afghanistan; and the truck driver in Ohio, Iyman Faris, who was named in a terrorist plot last month to blow up the Brooklyn Bridge.

Law enforcement officials have been quoted in the report as saying that the global reach of Tablighi Jamaat and its reputation for rejection of such activities such as politics made it a perfect avenue to be exploited by groups such as Al-Qaeda.

"We have a significant presence of Tablighi Jamaat in the United States and we have found that Al-Qaeda used them for recruiting, now and in the past", Michael Heimbach, deputy chief of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's international terrorism division has been quoted in *The Times* as saying.

Another unnamed senior law enforcement

official has described Tablighi Jamaat as a "natural entree, a way of gathering people together with a common interest in Islam".

What has been pointed out is that while Tablighi Jamaat has come to attract the attention of law enforcement and intelligence agencies, neither the organisation nor any of its activists have been directly accused of any crime-supporting terrorism.

And leaders of the group have said that the attention is unwarranted. "It's a very great accusation, a total lie. Anybody who has been active in our work, who spends at least three days, will have an understanding of our peaceful nature", Abdul Rahman Khan, Tablighi's leader of the North American Council, has been quoted by *The Times* as saying.

Mr. Khan has said that the fact that his group does not discuss politics meant that people with militant views quickly moved on.

"From our experience, those people who have those intentions don't talk around us. If someone starts even one word, we cut him off. So, he's going to go somewhere where he can get an audience", Mr. Khan said.

Seen as a network of part-time preachers, Tablighi Jamaat started its work in India in the last days of the British empire and has now bases and schools in Pakistan, Britain and Canada.

Some academics do not believe that the group has any formal ties to terror outfits.

"I don't believe there's a sinister plot where they're in bed with Osama bin Laden but are hiding it. But I think that militants exploit the alienated and withdrawn social attitude created by the Tablighis by fishing in the Tablighi pond", remarks Professor of Islamic Law at UCLA, Khaled Abou El Fadl.

ISLAMIC MEET / CLASH OF CIVILISATIONS NOTION DISMISSED

Scholars call for dialogue with West

PUTRAJAYA (MALAYSIA), JULY 11. Worried that Islam is being linked to terrorism, Muslim scholars at an international conference today proposed banning books that promote extremism and encouraging greater dialogue with the West.

Egypt's top Muslim cleric, Grand Sheik of Al-Azhar, Mohammed Sayed Tantawi, considered by many to be the Sunni Muslim world's highest religious authority, said Islamic nations should "wholeheartedly open our arms to the people who want peace with us" and reject violence against the innocent.

"I do not subscribe to the idea of a clash among civilisations," Sayed Tantawi said in a speech to 800 scholars and representatives of non-government groups from 34 countries. "People of different beliefs should cooperate and not get into senseless conflicts and animosity."

He did not give specific examples of texts that should be banned, but referred to books authored by extremist leaders with "radical ideas that have no logic behind them."

Delegates at the three-day conference ending on Saturday in Putrajaya, Malaysia's administrative capital, were discuss-



Delegates at the World Conference of Islamic Scholars in Putrajaya, Malaysia, on Friday. — AFP

ing issues facing Muslim nations, such as disunity, terrorism and misconceptions about their religion.

The religion's reputation was being marred by "extremists that hide under the slogans of Islam in deceit and propagate ideas that have no relation whatsoever to

Islam," said Sheik Husam Qaraqirah, who heads an Islamic charity association in Lebanon.

"We have to block them from channels that are meant to spread Islam," Qaraqirah said in a discussion paper distributed to delegates. — AP

THE HINDU

12 JUL 2003

Malaysia govt plans to annul SMS divorces

The Star/ Asia News Network

PUTRAJAYA (Malaysia), July 30. — The Malaysian government plans to put a stop to divorce by SMS — recently recognised by an Islamic court — after the entire Cabinet discussed the matter today.

Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the ministers felt that divorce by Muslim couples should not be done via SMS. “The Cabinet decided that while it may be correct from other angles, it is not the way to get divorced,” he told reporters at a luncheon.

Minister in the Prime Minister’s department Mr Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin said under the proposal, if a husband declares divorce on his wife via impersonal means — SMS, e-mail, letter, facsimile or telephone — the declaration would be considered invalid and it cannot be used as the basis by either one to have the divorce validated by the court. The move, he said, was meant to protect Islam from ridicule, as the acceptance of a divorce declaration through SMS or other impersonal means could give the wrong message that divorce was a trivial matter in Islam.

Furthermore, divorcing one’s wife in such manner was not only rude but also irresponsible, as it did not provide the proper closure to the marriage, he said.

Morocco begins mass trial of Islamists

CASABLANCA, JULY 22. A mass trial of hundreds of Moroccans suspected of having links with Islamic terrorism opened in Casablanca amid fears that the crackdown signals a return to the country's oppressive past.

In the gloom of Casablanca's criminal court, six rows of wisply bearded young men sitting behind a bullet-proof glass cage murmuring Koranic verses, represented the first batch of 700 Islamists to be tried.

As some of the suspects whispered encouragement to one another and laughed defiantly, other gaunt-looking young men shook uncontrollably as they wept. The 52 first suspects are

accused of belonging to a radical Islamic group held responsible for suicide bomb attacks against Jewish and Western targets that killed 44 people two months ago in Casablanca. Three alleged terrorists who are accused of planning to blow themselves up alongside the 12 suicide bombers who detonated five almost simultaneous blasts were the first to be called before the judge.

They were charged with "criminal association, undermining internal state security, sabotage, murder, intention to cause injury and permanent injury". — ©Telegraph Group Limited, London, 2003

THE HINDO

23 JUL 2003

Radical Islam in need for a radical rethink



HAROLD A. GOULD

What is open to examination here is the worth of strategies which fundamentalist Islamists like Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, Yasser Arafat, to the lesser known leaders of various terrorist bodies follow in pursuit of their aim of destroying secular society and replacing it with a theocratic, socio-religious order based on the narrowly interpreted Shariah Law

FOR two generations, the world has witnessed a mounting confrontation between Western modernism and what in recent years has been termed the "Arab street". The latter refers to the state of disgruntlement and social malaise that allegedly afflicts Islamic societies, particularly in the Middle East, South Asia and adjacent regions of Northern Africa.

The failure of most of the societies in these regions to attain full economic development, to overcome mass poverty, to evolve secular political institutions, and establish constructive relationships with the advanced industrial societies, whom they accuse of being the perpetrators of their social woes, has resulted in perpetual political turmoil and escalating patterns of domestic violence, international terrorism and, in the end, full-scale war. The bringing down of the Twin Towers on 9/11 by Muslim hijackers acting in the name of Islamic fundamentalism brought this crisis of political despair to a frightening climax. War with Afghanistan and Iraq followed in quick succession. Terrorism in Palestine and Kashmir go on exacting their tragic toll of innocent lives.

There have been numberless analyses on both sides of the political divide concerning the causes of this deep cleavage between two versions of right and wrong. Here, I do not mean merely the distinction between Islam and Christendom but instead that between the secular-modernising synthesis that has been driving the advanced industrial societies, embodied by NATO and the EU, plus Japan, and most recently China and India, on the one hand, and the backward-looking apocalyptic religiosity that pervades much of the grassroots leadership in the Muslim world, on the other.

While this Samuel Huntingtongesque distinction has its fascinations, mainly I want to raise questions concerning the simple practicality of the "strategic thinking" which has emanated from the Islamic radicals and driven them to the measures they have taken in pursuit of their stated objectives. Virtually no one

on either side has directed a critical eye towards this vitally important issue from the standpoint of the simple question: Has it worked?

What is open to examination here is the ultimate worth of the strategies which fundamentalist Islamists ranging from Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, Yasser Arafat, to the lesser known leaders of the various extremist and terrorist organisations in the Middle East and Pakistan, have elected to follow in pursuit of their goal of destroying secular society and replacing it with a theocratic, socio-religious order based upon the narrowly interpreted Shariah Law that purportedly would restore Islamic civilisation to its past grandeur.

When approached from this perspective, one need not enter into questions of the rightness or the wrongness of one socio-political system over the other. It requires only judgements pertaining to the quality of the results that have been achieved given the methods that have been employed.

There has been no dearth of criticism leveled against America's strategic choices for dealing with non-Western regions in general and the Muslim world in particular. Much of this criticism is well-deserved. The US indeed has been rightly faulted for pursuing double-standards towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, for propping up feudalistic Arab regimes like Saudi Arabia in order to keep the oil flowing, for winking at Saddam's Stalinism as long as it served American strategic interests, and for winking at Pakistan's state-sponsored terrorism against India as long as General Musharraf played ball in combating the variety of terrorism that America chooses to find reprehensible — i.e., Al Qaeda and the Taliban. Clearly, there has been the Devil to pay for American cultural and historical ignorance, and America's growing tendency to unilaterally employ its massive military power in pursuit of its own political and economic agendas while trampling on those of others.

Yet, in all fairness, America has been far less a monolith than has the Islamic world when it comes to public attitudes towards the currently dominant credo for addressing the world's problems. There has been an abundance of political dissent in the US concerning the courses the country's neo-conservative leaders have embarked upon following 9/11. There has been much agonising, even breast-beating, over the reasons why things have so often gone wrong. There is widely held acknowledgment that the US's seeming excessive partiality towards Israel in the Palestinian dispute has been misguided and has played a significant role in intensifying and justifying anti-Americanism throughout the Arab world. Even after 9/11, strong voices have been raised over the blanket prejudice manifested against Muslims at home and abroad. This contrasts vividly with the pervasive Nazi-style anti-Semitism and monolithic hate-mongering towards US currently afflicting Islamic societies, that is voiced not only by the Arab street but by government officials and the media in leading Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Behind this, as has been pointed out by many commentators, lies a mentality of unself-critical denial that tends to blame the outsider for social and political ills which can be more validly assigned to oneself.

Had there been greater inner reflection, and had there been a more realistic appraisal of the adversary which Islamic radicals elected to target in their determination to rectify the evils that allegedly reduced Islamic civilisation to its present state of decline and impotence, one wonders whether men like Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, and terrorist organisations like Hizbollah, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Hamas etc would have been so eager to initiate their quixotic assaults upon history's most powerful nation.

Even in the Islamic world there are alternative precedents to the implicit assumption which the current extremists

make — that religiously-driven politics must invariably involve a frenzied and violent crusade to eradicate the sum of human progress over the past two centuries and return to some mythologised, stereotypical fantasy of a past moral Golden Age.

After all, what have apocalyptic politics achieved for its architects. The Taliban and Al Qaeda were pulverised into virtual oblivion in Afghanistan by American B-52 bombers and helicopter gunships. Osama bin Laden is hiding in a cave somewhere in Pakistan, fearful of even using his cellphone. Mullah Omar has melted into the Afghan countryside. Saddam Hussein has become a mythologised non-person whose followers are reduced to hit-and-run attacks against an occupying American army.

Hizbollah and Hamas are employing idealistic young Palestinians as walking bombs whose self-detonations invite devastating retaliatory assaults on their innocent fellow citizens by President Ariel Sharon's Israeli war machine. Pakistani-endorsed and Pakistani-based terrorist organisations have gained virtually no political results from their cloak-and-dagger war against India over Kashmir, except perhaps for contributing to the destabilisation of Pakistan itself.

It is difficult not to contrast the non-results achieved by this pattern of revivalistic, fourth-generational warfare with the proven results that Mahatma Gandhi and other advocates of non-violent political action achieved. Gandhi's Non-Violent Revolution (Satyagraha) mobilised the energies and the aspirations of downtrodden Indians with hardly a shot being fired from the Indian side. The world's largest colonial empire was brought to its knees by what Winston Churchill called a "half-naked fakir" who simply made the point that if people collectively say "No!" to state tyranny, and imperialism, and stick to their resolve to non-cooperate with it, then eventually its promulgators tire of beating their heads against a political wall and opt for compromise and reconciliation.

The violence perpetrated by the terrorists in all their guises made it easy in the end for the United States to justify unleashing against them an order of military power which the radicals could not even imagine, much less cope with. The radicals' bravado notwithstanding, the truth is that their infrastructures and their resources have been decimated

The violence perpetrated by the terrorists in all their guises made it easy in the end for the US to justify unleashing against them an order of military power which the radicals could not cope with

and they are now reduced to no more than desperate, desultory attacks on the Great Satan whose main effect is to kill and maim innocents while leaving their principal adversary smugly intact.

This should be a time for radical rethinking by the radical Islamists. The model for effectively combating great-power bullies was fashioned almost a century ago by Gandhi and his predecessors. With it, Gandhi brought down empires. Osama bin Laden, Mullah Omar and Saddam Hussein succeeded only in bringing their fundamentalist temple down upon their heads.

(Harold Gould is Visiting Scholar at the Center for South Asian Studies in the University of Virginia)

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Taliban revival on Pakistani soil

10/6

The Taliban was not rooted out of Afghanistan; it has simply migrated. The fundamentalist Muttahida Majlis e Amal (MMA), which dominates the legislative assembly of Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), has introduced mandatory prayer calls five times a day for government employees, prohibited shirts and trousers in school uniform, and banned male doctors from treating women. The assembly has also voted unanimously for the adoption of *sharia* law, and authorized the creation of a Prevention of Vice and Protection of Virtue Department, modelled on the Taliban's infamous religious police. It is noteworthy that MMA leaders, like the Taliban, are followers of the Deobandi school of theology, which enjoins an intolerant and sectarian interpretation of Islam; also that there has been a surge of Taliban-inspired anti-government attacks in neighbouring Afghanistan since the MMA came to power in the provincial assembly with a nod and a wink from the Musharraf establishment.

The salient question is, how long can Pakistan nurture *jehadi* militancy as well as US troops on its soil? The two are bound to come into collision, and even a recalcitrant and somnolent Washington will have to take notice and rap General Musharraf at some point. Musharraf has removed two top officials in the NWFP administration, but that doesn't look like a decisive move likely to rein in the MMA, especially as he carried favour with them in the past hoping to marginalize the secular and democratic opposition to military rule. Whether or not the MMA is allowed a free run in NWFP will have repercussions on national politics. The MMA has been vocal in the national legislature demanding Musharraf take off his uniform if he wants to stay on as President. It is likely to intensify this demand, which already paralyses the legislature, in case Musharraf moves against it in NWFP. In that case Musharraf may have to cast off his democratic veneer and dissolve the Assembly. Alternatively, if he does a deal with the MMA, he would have to do a General Zia and accommodate its demand for an Islamization of the rest of Pakistan. Zia pulled it off because his mentors in Washington had at the time an interest in promoting *jihad*. That margin of tolerance doesn't exist any more after 9/11, as the *jehadi* targets of choice won't be Soviet troops on Afghan soil, but US troops on Pakistani soil.

10 JUN 2003

THE STATESMAN

Masood Azhar resurfaces, preaches jehad

100-1 116 9/10/03
By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MAY 31. A defiant Maulana Masood Azhar, chief of the banned Jaish-e-Mohammad, continues to breathe fire and preach the path of 'jehad' (holy war).

While the Peshawar police did prevent him on Friday from addressing a conference organised by Khudam-ul-Islam, which police believe is a reincarnation of the Jaish, he later surfaced at a local mosque and addressed a gathering.

According to media reports, he not only eulogised Osama bin-Laden and Mullah Omar but also made a forceful speech on the need for the faithful to join against the "secular forces".

It is immediately not clear if the Pakistan Government is contemplating any cases against him.

In his sermon on Friday, Azhar has been quoted as saying that secular forces were adamant to eliminate jehad and accused the rulers of acting as agents.

He told the gathering that those involved in such "treacherous" activities would be destroyed.

Azhar has been quoted as saying that most of the Muslim rulers who had the lust for power were playing into the hands of these secular forces.

Pak. province to pass Taliban-style law

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MAY 24. Raising concerns in the civil society, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) Government in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) has decided to introduce Taliban-style "vice and virtue organisation" to enforce Sharia (Islamic laws) in the province.

A decision to constitute the new body was taken at a Cabinet meeting in Peshawar, capital of NWFP, on Thursday. Several actions of the Government led by religious parties have already caused alarm in the Frontier. These include ban on music in public places, raids on cable operators on grounds of spreading obscenity and the decision to introduce traditional uniform after dubbing pants and shirt as "anti-Islam".

The stated objective of the vice and virtue body is to keep a check on the Government machinery and "stop the people from doing wrong deeds" and to enforce the Sharia. The MMA would present the draft Hisbah Bill before the provincial Assembly for legislation in this regard.

The religious alliance will also table the much-publicised Sharia Bill in the Assembly next week. The bill would need ratification from Parliament, as several subjects in the proposed legislation

would fall under the Central List.

Briefing journalists after the provincial Cabinet meeting on Thursday, the Provincial Law Secretary, Amir Gulab Khan, said the vice and virtue organisation would try to remove all "evils" from society and strive for the spread of "good things". The moot question is who would define "evil" and "good things"?

He said the organisation's decisions could not be challenged in appeal or before any court nor could a stay be granted against its actions. "It will be rendered ineffective if any court is authorised to stay the organisation's decisions," Mr. Khan said.

The Law Secretary also disclosed the organisation would eventually have its own force to enforce Sharia. However, police force would be used for implementing the body's decisions for the time being due to funds shortage. Asked if a "corrupt police force" would not contaminate the new organisation, he said, "We will not pick the corrupt from among the police force."

Asked about the responsibilities of the new organisation, Mr. Khan said, "It will have two jobs: dealing with complaints against the Government machinery and ensuring that all Muslims offer prayers five times a day and pay zakat (a percent-

age of money to be paid by citizens from their income to the Government for charity purposes)". He, however, rejected the impression that the organisation could use force against non-compliant Muslims.

However, the organisation would be barred from interfering in any matter protected under "national security", and anything concerned with defence and military laws could not be brought before the organisation. The exemption would effectively place the armed forces beyond the ambit of the body.

The organisation will be headed by the NWFP ombudsman at the provincial level and by the district ombudsmen at the district level. The provincial ombudsman's status will be equal to a judge of the Federal Sharia Court.

Mr. Khan said the ombudsman could order the imprisonment of "the guilty" for six months or hand down a fine of Rs 2,000. He did not agree that the establishment of the organisation would cause overlapping of jurisdiction among the judicial forums. The Cabinet will send the draft Hisbah Bill to the Governor, Syed Iftikhar Hussain Shah, for his assent. The Government has asked the Governor to summon the Assembly session for May 27 to table the Sharia Bill.

25 MAY 2003

Islam and democracy

By Imtiaz Ahmad

10-10
1775

ISLAM THROUGHOUT its history has been characterised by an obvious paradox. This is its simultaneous unity and its bewildering diversity as the living faith of local, regional and national communities. The typical response of Muslims to this diversity has run along two lines. One is to gloss over the paradox and continue to act on the premise that Islam is one, characterised by a common *shar'ia* (the canonical law of Islam). The second is to regard the diversity of beliefs and behaviour as a temporary anomaly susceptible of elimination as the rules of the *shar'ia* take hold.

The implication of this religious pluralism is two-fold (1) the unity of Islam is not axiomatic or given, but is achieved through a complex process of interpretation and construction, and (2) as a practised faith Islam is far more pluralistic than the extreme degree of reification and unity attributed to it. Each Muslim society constructs its own self-definition of what is fundamental.

The reason this becomes possible is an in-built ambiguity as to what is strictly within the limits of the *shar'ia*. Controversy and debate, whether a particular action of individuals or communities, is a recurrent feature of Muslim societies.

Controversy and dialogue are not merely the result of ambiguity in collective perceptions. Even in scriptural literature, there exists a possibility for ambiguity to prevail due to the different sections of the scripture advocating seemingly contradictory positions. For example, on the question of the treatment to be meted out to a non-believer (*kafir*) there are two positions: (1) that he be converted on the point of the sword, and (2) he be allowed to persist in the solace of his faith on the ground that there is no compulsion in matters of faith.

This brings us to the popular perception that the high degree of Islamic doctrines orients towards religious militancy and violence. This image of Islam is an academic artefact of the historical process of colonial expansion reinforced by political events involving confrontation with U.S. hegemony. For the one-fifth of

humanity, which is self-defined as Muslim, collective violence assumed a new dimension in the eighteenth century. It can be described in different stages, all of which relate to the economic ascendancy of European, predominantly Christian nation-states. Thus, twentieth century Islam like the nation-state system was created *de novo* in response to colonialism.

As to contemporary times, the situation is too complex and varied to

legated Islamic self-consciousness with religious concerns for identity. Integrative democratic structures result in very little concern for Islam. Where Islamic self-identity is assured, Muslims tend to become extremely divided and often end up fighting among themselves.

These differences of political response are matched by varied ideological orientations. First, there are the secularists, though limited in size and influence, who would like to

capitalist order and virtual democratic governance in much of the third world, particularly Muslim countries. The uncritical support of the West to the autocratic regimes to fight Soviet Communism during the Cold War period freed them from any obligation to introduce any democratic measures. At present, these regimes cause so much anger among the people who are unable to express their opinion. Pent up feelings lead to acts of violence. It is only through democratisation that these countries can hope to get rid of pro-Western authoritarian regimes.

Contemporaneously, two conflicting trends are discernible throughout the Muslim world: the wave of democratic urge pulsates and simultaneously the popularity of Islamic fundamentalism escalates. That is, the number of people who believe that the frame of reference of organising the political realm should now be derived from a basic understanding of the Islamic text has grown. This phenomenon, particularly in the post-Cold War period, is apprehended to bring in an Islamic state system. But while this remains the promise of the fundamentalists, their real fortunes as a political force have fallen short of expectations.

So long as authoritarian regimes in Muslim countries find it expedient to respond to the fundamentalists' challenge by repression rather than reform, the latter, however inept their political programme, will find a ready audience. The trouble with authoritarian regimes is that they promised national honour and held out hopes of goods and services but ultimately failed to deliver either. When the regimes failed, it was natural that Islamic fundamentalists would blame that failure on the experiments being un-godly though their programmes might be no different. This explains that the manifestoes of the Islamic fundamentalist groups have no solutions for the socio-economic ills of the society. It is because of this lack of vision that they are unable to strike deep roots among the masses.

(The writer is a former Professor of Sociology, JNU.)

So long as authoritarian regimes find it expedient to respond to the fundamentalists' challenge by repression rather than reform, the latter will find a ready audience.

allow sweeping generalisation. Nearly two-thirds of the Muslim world currently lives under some kind of secular dispensation. Even in some of these societies the fundamentalist groups have been active, but whenever they have seemed to be gaining political ascendancy they have been put down with a heavy hand. Even so, the dominant tendency has been to characterise Islamic fundamentalism in terms as if its rhetorical message is about to become an eminent reality. This has led to the speculation whether the current ideological struggle in the world is between Islam and the West.

Among the countries of the Muslim World one contemporaneously finds a series of political responses, from the presence of an Islamic discourse to militant Islamic reassertion to open rebellion. When one looks at the varied cases comparatively it is clear that colonialism and the nature of political regime seem always to generate Islamic self-consciousness. Goals, perceived or manifest, of the dominant non-Muslim groups are also crucial in determining the nature and scale of Islamic response. Threats of liquidation, conquest and domination produce rebellion. Authoritarian domination leads to independent movements of an Islamic variety. Cultural domination with a democratic structure generates var-

ious model society on secular lines. Second, there are the traditionalists who have frozen the Islamic message and would let the winds of changes pass by. Third, there are the modernists who seek to draw upon the resources of Islam to build a society and polity free of exploitation and repression. Fourthly, there are the Islamic fundamentalists who, while they hark back to the tradition, are ill-equipped to harness Islam for the reconstruction of Muslim societies.

Islamic fundamentalism is essentially a product of the long historical development in Muslim societies with the hegemony of the West during the colonial period. The colonial experience is not something of the past. It has been continuing. Political and military imperialism was bad enough, but much more demoralising is the ethical, cultural and intellectual arrogance of the West. If in the past all ascendant civilisations had their moments of self-righteousness, no civilisation before the modern West felt itself so completely valid that mere questioning of some of its values can be tantamount to barbaric backwardness. While it talks of freedom and equality at home, it sustains gross economic exploitation and denial of democracy abroad.

Thus, the roots of violent expressions of religious protest lie in the existence of an undemocratic global

THE MINDO

17 MAY 2003

'Islam and Peace' meet condemns terrorism

49-15 19/4
Islam

TUNIS, APRIL 18. An international "Islam and Peace" conference has closed in the Tunisian capital with a declaration condemning terrorism and calling for dialogue between the world's different cultures and religions. At its close yesterday, delegates to the conference — organised by Tunisia's Religious Affairs Ministry and the Organisation of Islamic Conferences (OIC) — rejected "terrorism in all its forms regardless of its basis or justification".

The "Tunis Declaration for Peace" describes the global climate as marked by "persistent war and aggression and the rule of might, which poses a threat to humanity". It condemns those who "consciously or unconsciously" assimilate Islam with terrorism and violence and calls on thinkers in the western world to block the logic of hegemony and supremacy, rampant in north Atlantic countries. Saying that Islam is a religion based on tolerance and moderation, the declaration rejects barriers of race and religion. Many delegates denounced the cliches and pre-conceptions of Islam in the international media, and one vociferously criticised people in the U.S. who are "intent on demonising Arabs and Muslims, who fan the flames of misunderstanding and hostility between peoples," state-run news paper *La Presse* said.

Representatives from the Maghreb Arab Union — made up of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia — the Arab Organisation for Education, Culture and Science (ALECSO), and Britain, Egypt, France, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Syria and the U.S. took part in the conference. — AFP

19 APR 2003

THE HINDU

'Islam and Peace' meet condemns terrorism

19-15-1979 Islam
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19 APR 2003

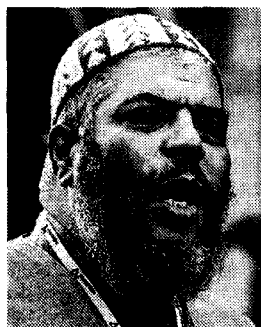
THE HINDU



GLOBESCAN

Radical cleric may lose passport

LONDON: Britain is preparing to strip the radical Muslim cleric, Abu Hamza (*in the picture*), of his British passport for



inciting racial and religious hatred. The Home Secretary, David Blunkett, is expected to exercise tough legal powers which come into effect this week allowing him to revoke the British nationality of residents with dual citizenship if their actions are "seriously prejudicial to the vital interests of the United Kingdom". Mr. Hamza has a long history of vocal support for Islamic fundamentalism. He has a hook for a hand and only one eye —

the result, he says, of fighting the Soviet army in Afghanistan. He denies involvement in terrorism but is wanted on terror charges in Yemen. The Egyptian-born cleric came to Britain in 1980 and was granted British citizenship after marrying an English woman. Since then, he is thought to have received more than £100,000 in welfare benefits, including housing benefit. However, dependence on the British state has not stopped him from preaching against the West. — PTI

Serbia move on war crimes

BELGRADE: The Serbian Government has agreed to scrap a law blocking the extradition to the U.N. war crimes tribunal of any more nationals suspected of committing atrocities in the Balkan wars of the 1990s. The decision now has to be submitted to Parliament and voted on by deputies before it can be adopted. Serbia's reformists want to change a controversial article governing the country's relations with The Hague-based court which stipulates only indictments submitted before the law came into force in April 2002 could be acted on. The Government is attempting to secure stability in the country following the assassination earlier this month of the Prime Minister, Zoran Djindjic. The Government has blamed crime bosses for his murder. — AP

3 1 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

Fatwa politics make a comeback

Statesman News Service

DHAKA, March 7. — The Bangladesh High Court in a landmark judgment in January 2001 may have declared the issuance of *fatwa* as illegal, but a leaflet circulated here yesterday renewed fundamentalist calls for the enforcement of *fatwa*.

The leaflets distributed in the name of Islami Ain Bastabayan Committee (Implementation of Islamic Laws) among the participants of a demonstration in the capital against a possible USA-led attack on Iraq mentioned the names of Mufti Fazlul Haq Amini and Mufti Mohammad Waqqas, both lawmakers in the ruling four-party coalition.

“The system of *fatwa* existed in the past, it exists now and will continue to exist in future,” says the leaflet. It also says that Mr Amini and Mr Waqqas convened a meeting on 21 March at the city’s Paltan Maidan.

The High Court in its verdict delivered on 1 January, 2001 had said any *fatwa* or so-called legal opinion not given by any court is illegal. Following the judgment, Mr Amini, Mr Waqqas and other fundamentalists had declared the two judges who gave the verdict to be *murtads* (infidel).

A leading vernacular daily, *Prothom Alo*, in a report today said although home minister, Mr Altaf Hossain Chowdhury stated in Parliament that an emerging fundamentalist outfit Al-Hikma was banned with effect from 9 February, police find it difficult to take action against its leaders arrested as the relevant papers relating to such ban did not reach them (police) in the northern Rajshahi district where the organisation established its base.

Osama returns with 51-3 more vitriol 1712 ✓

LONDON, Feb. 16. — A new audio tape, purportedly from Osama bin Laden, accuses the USA of plotting to carve up Muslim countries in the West Asia to benefit Israel and create a “greater Israel”.

“A US-led war on Iraq will only be a stage in a series of planned attacks targeting other countries, including Syria, Iran, Egypt and Sudan,” the message said, adding the “greater Israel” envisaged will include “large parts of Iraq and Egypt along with Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the whole of Palestine and parts of the holy Mosques (Saudi Arabia).” The message urged Muslims to “fight the enemy that sabotages the world,” describing jihad, as “necessity”. According to *BBC*, excerpts of the 53-minute recording were published today by the Saudi-owned *Al Hayat* newspaper. — PTI

THE STATESMAN

17 FEB 2003

US Says Osama's Destructive Directive Shows Baghdad Has Links With Al-Qaeda

Laden tells Iraqis to go for suicide attacks

Robert H. Reid
DOHA 12 FEBRUARY

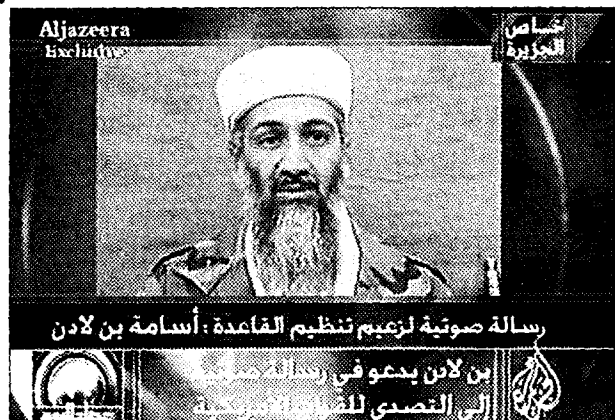
THE al-Jazeera satellite television station on Tuesday aired throughout the Arab world a tape which urged Iraqis to stage suicide attacks and lure American troops into bloody urban battles to inflict "big casualties." US officials said they believe the voice on the tape is that of the elusive Osama bin Laden.

The purported voice of bin Laden urges Muslims to help Saddam Hussein fight Americans even though his government is of infidels, words US officials said showed the Iraqi leader's ties to the al-Qaeda terror network. A senior Iraqi official denied any links to the terrorist leader.

US secretary of State Colin Powell said the comments, broadcast on the first day of Islamic holiday Eid al-Adha, bolstered US allegations that Iraq is harboring al-Qaeda operatives.

"This nexus between terrorists and states that are developing weapons of mass destruction can no longer be looked away from and ignored," Mr Powell told the Senate budget committee.

Some West Asian experts have questioned ties between bin Laden's group and Saddam's government, which adheres to a Pan-Arabic socialistic doctrine called Baathism. In the tape, the speaker said Iraq was governed by socialist infidels, including Saddam.



TERROR SPEAK: Al-Jazeera TV uses an undated file photo of Osama bin Laden as it plays an audio tape, purportedly containing a message from the terror mastermind, during a telecast on Tuesday. — AP

But he said it was acceptable for Muslims to fight on behalf of Iraqi socialists because "in these circumstances" their interests "intersect in fighting against the crusaders," or Christians.

The tape has not been reported on Iraqi media and most Iraqis do not have satellite dishes. In an interview on Wednesday with the Lebanese Broadcasting Corp, Iraqi vice-president Taha Yassin Ramadan denied his country had any links with the al-Qaeda or has sheltered any members of bin Laden's group. He claimed the US was using the al-Qaeda allegation as a pretext for war.

"They are looking for oil, for Arab oil and want to protect the Zionist entity that usurped the

land of the Arabs," Mr Ramadan said. Some US analysts wondered at bin Laden's motives for issuing a statement supporting Iraq, given many countries' scepticism of US allegations of Iraqi-al-Qaeda links. Others worried the recording would inflame Muslims against US troops in the Persian Gulf region.

The tape was broadcast as US officials were warning of imminent terror attacks in the United States or in the Persian Gulf, where more than 1,13,000 US troops are massing for a possible attack on Iraq. On the tape, the speaker urged Iraqis to profit from the lessons learned by al-Qaeda fighters in the war against the US and their allies. — Reuters

India to sound high alert in case of war

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 12 FEBRUARY

AN imminent war in Iraq by the US might have its unintended, but damaging consequences in the sub-continent. Among the reasons for the Indian government's ambivalence on the coming US confrontation in Iraq is the assessment in South Block that the war may cause an implosion within Pakistani society that the Musharraf regime might find difficult to contain.

The upsurge in jihadi sentiments, coupled with rising anti-US feelings currently on the rise in Pakistan, may need a safety release. And India fears that release will be directed towards increased infiltration and terrorism inside Jammu & Kashmir. Therefore, India will put its security forces on heightened alert during the Iraq war and security sources here will not even rule out pre-emptive strikes to contain the terrorist menace. The diplomatic upshot will see India stepping up its volume, demanding Pakistan stop cross-border terrorism, while the prospects of dialogue appear slim. But things may not be as easy for the Pakistani general as it might seem. Opposition to war in Iraq has sent jihadis on a high in Pakistan. Jamaat-ul-Dawa in Muridke, formerly the headquarters of Lashkar-e-Toiba, are back in business and the al-Qaeda have scattered through Pakistan, with heavy concentration in north-western tribal areas.

They have been helped by the fact that the Musharraf regime has failed to follow through its promises to curb terrorism from Pakistani soil, even going to the extent of allowing banned terrorists like Azam Tariq of Sipah-e-Sahaba to contest elections. The Kashmir groups have found their funds flowing again, and leaders like Hafiz Mohammed Saeed and Maulana Masood Azhar are back on the streets, while reports abound of the ISI training Mushtaq Zargar — the third terrorist released during the IC-814 hijack by India — for operations in India. Musharraf's tactics have not gone unnoticed by either the United States or India and recently the US ambassador Nancy Powell earned the collective wrath of the establishment when she asked Pakistan to stop terrorism in India.

J&K ULTRAS ASK WOMEN TO QUIT JOBS

Fatwa with a death threat

5/1
2/1

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Jan. 20. — The Harkat-ul-Jehadi Islami has threatened Muslim women in Jammu and Kashmir with death if they do not quit their government jobs by 25 January. This comes a month after the Lashkar-e-Jabbar asked women in the Kashmir valley and Rajouri to wear *burqa*.

Posters have been found pasted on the main wall of a mosque of Shahdara Sharief in Rajouri asking women to quit government jobs by 25 January. The outfit has threatened to kill those who disobey its orders.

The posters, which have been removed by the police, ask all families to get their daughters, who have reached the age of 15, married immediately. It directs women not to bathe in rivers and ponds. "Women should bathe at home. Whenever they go out, they should wear veil. They should never travel alone."

Last week, posters were found pasted outside the house of Mr Bashir Ahmed, revenue officer in Thanamandi, Rajouri, asking girls below 14 years of age to quit studies. The

women Special Police Officers (SPO) were asked to quit their jobs and sit at home.

Earlier this month, Lashkar-e-Jabbar asked people in Rajouri to follow the edict on dress code — *burqa* or black robe/veil for women and *sherwani* for men. It threatened to take action against those who disobeyed their orders. Militants killed three women in Rajouri in one night. Another woman was killed a couple of days later. It was believed that the

■ Girls will have to get married at age 15
■ Women will have to bathe at home and must not travel alone

women were killed because they did not adhere to the dress code. Jabbar has asked non-Muslim Kashmiri doctors to leave the valley immediately.

The Lashkar-e-Taiyaba has warned those selling alcohol of "severe action" if they did not stop this "un-Islamic" business immediately. It has put up posters in Kulgam warning of severe action against those in wine business.

PDP worker killed: Militants shot dead a PDP worker and tried to set off two IEDs in the Kashmir valley today. Bullet-riddled body of a PDP worker was recovered by police in Anantnag this morning. Security forces detected a powerful IED at Awantipora on Srinagar-Jammu National Highway.

THE STATESMAN

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Police storm London mosque in terror raid

Radicals revel in glare

London, Jan. 20 (Reuters): Police used battering rams and ladders to raid a London mosque today in Britain's biggest anti-terror operation since September 11, arresting seven men as part of a wider probe into the discovery of ricin poison.

Police said the north London mosque was a centre for recruiting violent Islamic extremists and supporting their operations in Britain and abroad.

As two helicopters circled over Finsbury Park before dawn — illuminating the mosque with spotlights — about 150 officers in riot gear swarmed out of dozens of police vehicles.

They climbed up to windows with ladders and used hand-held rams to get through doors, witnesses said. Advised by Muslim colleagues, the officers avoided prayer areas "to show our respect for the Muslim faith" and instead scoured accommodation and office spaces, a police statement said.

Police gathered documents and arrested seven men — six north Africans and one east European — from inside the mosque and two adjacent homes.

"We have no quarrel with the regular attendees at the mosque," assistant police commissioner Andy Trotter said. "This has been a very successful raid today."

It was the most dramatic in a series of counter-terrorism swoops in recent months, with the pace quickening after the discovery this month of deadly poison in a London flat.

The mosque is the base of one of Britain's most outspoken Muslim clerics, Abu Hamza al-Masri, who won notoriety for praising Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network, which Washington blames for the September 11 attacks.

Egyptian-born Masri, who has one eye and wears a hook where a hand was blown off by a landmine, was not arrested.

He lashed out at the British government, calling the raid part of an unfair "war on Muslims" and a knee-jerk reaction to last week's stabbing to death of a policeman in another anti-terror operation in the northern city of Manchester.

"This is just because (Prime Minister Tony) Blair wants to

cover his mistakes," Masri said. "I'm not concerned — they have already taken my passport, they have taken my money, and now the only thing left for them to do is to crucify me." Scotland Yard said the raid was linked to the seizure on January 5 of a small amount of ricin, one of the world's deadliest poisons, in the nearby Wood Green district.

"Police believe these premises have played a role in the recruitment of suspected terrorists and in supporting their activity both here and abroad," the police statement said. No chemicals were found at the mosque, police added. Masri, leader of a group called Supporters of Sharia (Islamic law), said two of the arrested men were security staff while the other five were volunteers.

Britain has arrested more than 200 terror suspects since the September 11 attacks, with most of those detained said to be north African and mainly Algerian.

Many have been released without charge though the number held has surged since November.



Abu Hamza al-Masri (AFP)

Masri accused London of persecuting Algerians in its drive to break up alleged terror cells.

"This is a conspiracy against Algerians in Britain," he said. A Blair spokesman said the operation had the Prime Minister's "full support."

PAUL MAJENDIE

London, Jan. 20 (Reuters): For radical Muslims, today's police raid on a London mosque was the perfect rallying cry to attract young extremists to their cause.

"This raid will increase our recruitment," Sheikh Omar Bakri Muhammad, global leader of the radical al-Muhajiroun group, said after police burst into the mosque in Britain's biggest anti-terror operation since the September 11 attacks.

"In this environment, the issue becomes black and white. Now the moderates have no grey area to monopolise. If they arrest us, we will become martyrs," said the Syrian-born cleric who supports al-Qaida.

Bakri said: "This is a violation of the house of God. It will raise the question of the authenticity of man-made law. Any embassy has immunity. The house of God has no immunity."

The London-based radical has in the past caused outrage after reports that he called British leader Tony Blair a "legitimate target" for Muslims and urged followers to kill anyone involved in military action against Muslims.

Police said then they had insufficient evidence to prosecute him for racial incitement, but would monitor his activities.

Bakri later said al-Muhajiroun's Pakistan branch had described Blair as a legitimate target for Muslims, not him.

Abdel Bari Atwan, editor of the Arabic newspaper *al-Quds al-Arabi*, agreed that the raid could be a blow to moderates among the 1.8 million Muslims in Britain.

"Definitely there will be more radicals. Frustrated people will become more frustrated. It will create hatred among young people and we don't need that," he said. "We should not treat

everybody as terrorists." "It is outrageous to raid a mosque like that," he said. "Police are panicking. Every Muslim is a suspect."

Radical preachers at the raided Finsbury Park mosque do not have to look far for recruits. Hundreds of unemployed Algerians gather in coffee shops and many gather at the mosque to hear fiery sermons every Friday.

What moderate Muslims fear is a backlash against their community after the discovery of deadly ricin poison in London and then the death of a policeman in follow-up raids.

"Muslims have suffered increasing Islamophobia since September 11," said Inayat Bunglawala, a spokesman for the Muslim Council of Britain.

"Ordinary Muslims feel uncomfortable at work. They are looked at with suspicion, they are regarded with a wary eye," he said.

Anxiety grips Pakistanis in America

MARK BIXLER

Atlanta, Jan. 15: An anxiety that has gripped foreign nationals from 16 Muslim nations is spreading among students, tourists and businesspeople from Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

They have until February 21 to report to the Immigration and Naturalisation Service, the latest citizens of several Muslim nations to be fingerprinted, photographed and interviewed in a programme to track foreign visitors.

The prospect petrifies some who work and pay taxes but have overstayed a visa, said Rehan Khan, a businessman and former president of the Pakistani

American Society of Atlanta. He said they worry "they will go to jail and be deported" and wonder why the government singles out visitors from countries whose governments have allied themselves with the US in the war on terrorism.

"They are not pointing to Mexicans or Chinese," he said. "Why are they pointing to Pakistanis?"

In Georgia and around the US, the INS has significantly stepped up the detention and deportation of foreign nationals from Muslim nations in response to public pressure to safeguard the US from terrorists like the ones who struck on September 11, 2001. The number of peo-

ple deported to Muslim countries in North Africa, the West Asia and South Asia multiplied faster than for citizens of virtually every other country, according to a Journal-Constitution computer analysis of INS records.

The new focus disrupted the routine of Carma Said of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. She said the INS deported her husband to Egypt even though it had approved his request for legal residency.

"They just destroyed a whole family," she said. "The country that I love and that I'd go fight for let me down."

Paul Virtue, a Washington immigration lawyer and former

INS general counsel, said the increased attention to Arab and Muslim immigrants makes sense. "That's where the threat is," he said.

Others decry a selective enforcement that they say provides only the illusion of security. They point out that no Arab or Muslim immigrant detained or deported after September 11 has been charged with a crime related to terrorism.

"The government is engaging in racial, religious and ethnic profiling. They're not doing anything that's making us any safer," said Dalia Hashad, the ACLU's advocate for West Asian and South Asian immigrants. "This is selective enforcement,

and it's ridiculous, inappropriate punishment."

The 19 hijackers who struck on September 11, 2001, were from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon and the UAE. Three had overstayed visas and were in the country illegally.

The US justice department secretly detained at least 899 immigrants during the terrorism investigation, mostly from West Asian or South Asian countries. Authorities say 765 were held on immigration violations, such as overstaying a visa, and 134 were charged with some crimes unrelated to terrorism, such as credit card fraud or lying on a passport application, but advocates say the real number is closer to 1,200.

Most were deported. Doris Meissner, INS commissioner from 1993 to 2000, said she doubts authorities would have deported people who threatened national security — they would have charged them as terrorists instead. She said the focus on Muslim nations "was inevitable and predictable right after 9-11, but I think it became clear pretty quickly that focusing that way was not unearthing terrorists."

Jorge Martinez, spokesman for the justice department, disputed that.

"That a detainee has been deported from the US does not necessarily indicate that he or she had no knowledge of or connection to terrorism," the de-

partment said.

Doctor 'asylum'

Pakistani authorities accused a detained medical doctor and his family today of harbouring prominent members of the al Qaida network.

Deputy attorney general Sher Zaman told a court in Lahore that Ahmed Javed Khawaja and four relatives, arrested last month in the village of Manawa, had assisted some of al Qaida's most wanted members. "It was revealed through investigation that the al Qaida's most wanted terrorists were being harboured in Manawa by Dr Ahmed Javed Khawaja and his family," he said.

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