

IMPACT OF SEPTEMBER 11 EVENTS ON POWER AND STABILITY IN ASIA

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INTRODUCTION

The strategic position of Asia in global politics and economy cannot be overemphasized. Asia, particularly the Middle East, Persian Gulf and the so called Asian Tigers is to the West, and indeed the world, the source of energy and exotic finished goods. Asia has been, in the last 50 years, the focus of Western capitalist groups and nations who developed strong economic interests in the continent and who have made efforts to protect such interests.

In international politics, namely the struggle for nations, groups and men, economic interests are well protected when political power has been acquired, hence it is not surprising that Western nations have become over-bearing on the most economically endowed Asian countries. This over-activeness is viewed with consternation and seen as neo-colonization by Asians, particularly the Arabs who read religious meanings to every political action by the West. This explains the war by proxy, namely 'terrorist' attacks on Western nations as a way of protecting the Arab culture, religion and identity.

The climax of such 'terrorism' was the September 11 attack on New York and Washington D.C., which escalated U.S. anti-terrorism campaigns, leading to the sporadic bombardment of terrorist basis in Afghanistan and the quest in recent times by President

George Bush of the US and Tony Blair of Britain to remove Saddam Hussein of Iraq from power by all means.

The American reaction and collective Western campaigns against terrorism since September 11, 2001 have, to a large extent, altered the political climate in Asia, particularly the patterns of alignments, alliances and power configuration. This development is pivotal in this discourse.

Issues in this paper are discussed within historical context. The conclusion is that politically, the west now has Asia in its pocket, a development that has eventually given Western powers a leeway to control the economy of the continent as they successfully did in Africa about two decades ago.

WESTERN INFLUENCE IN ASIA, 1945-2001

The terrorist strikes of September 11, 2001 cannot be well appreciated unless a deep historical excursion into power and politics in Asia is done. In fact, the strikes were the climax of a very long history of deep-seated Arab resentment towards Western imperial and neo-colonial activities in the continent. The end of the Second World War closed a chapter in the long history of imperialism by which nations no longer established direct political control on one another but adopted subtle indirect means to subject the other to a more lasting servitude. The war was fought in the first place to end German imperialism and racism and to make the European society free from future imperialist attacks. With the demise of German power however, there emerged a new global order in which two superpowers namely, the Soviet Union and the United States of America (USA) emerged.

The two nations were incidentally, different ideologically, politically and structurally. These nations differed so much that their ideologies clashed and it was only a matter of time that their interests too began to clash in countries of the world. The extreme divergences soon led to political hatred, which reflected in the ways the US, and Russia vetoed motions in the United Nations Security council.¹

The USA with its liberal/capitalist democracy strongly opposed the Soviet's communist ideology. The significant thing about all this development was that both countries attempted to share the world according to ideological leanings. This era of bipolarity that marked the New World Order was characterised by the cold war between the two world powers. Until 1989, when the rivalry and animosity took the back seat in world politics, the cold war had increased the tempo of neo-imperialism and the mad rush for gaining the control of and consolidating influence on the world's most economically viable territories.

The US interest in Africa, Latin America, Europe and Asia grew in leaps and bounds just as the Soviet Union increased its presence in the continent. Europe was divided into two, with Western Europe generally sharing in the democratic ideology of the West and the whole Eastern Europe coming under the strong influence of socialism. Asia, a large mass of continent with the world's highest population density soon after became the centre of bitter struggles between communism and capitalist democracy.

In the process of tearing Asia into two, several wars were fought by proxy between the US and Soviet Union. The 'war' for Asia was however fought not so much for the extension of democracy's and communism's frontiers, as much as that of securing the wealth of the continent to sustain and oil the wheels of the two ideologies. Again as expanding world powers, the two countries needed a capital base to always keep their economies developed and maintained. Asia, particularly the Middle East was abundantly endowed with oil mineral. Other invaluable resources in Asia included gold, ivory and spices.²

It is however pertinent to note that, while the Soviet presence in Asia was political the American motive in the continent was economic, but effectively put in place and allowed some significant leverage in the political scheme of things.³ This is not to say that Western presence in Asia began after the world war. The whole of Asia had been an effective sphere of influence of major European powers as far back as the fifteenth

century when the search for alternative routes to the Orient for spices, and by the sixteenth century, Holland, England and France had firmly established strong economic influence and some modicum of political control over Asian countries. From the Persian Gulf through the Indian Ocean, present day Papua New Guinea and Japan, the influence of Europe was prominently felt.

Interestingly, the most of Europe was Christian and two centuries earlier, religious wars or crusades had occurred with Christian monarchs in feudal Europe going all out to crush “Mohammedans” (Muslims) in Turkey and Persian Gulf who were then seen as troublesome.

The primary intent for the war was to expand the bounds of Christendom in Europe and to Islamic enclaves in the Middle East. But economic motives were paramount in these wars. The Muslims who occupied areas from the eastern fringes of Europe up to the Gulf of Persia constituted a bottleneck in the European exploratory and overseas drive to the Far East in search of raw materials, namely, spices. Moreover, England, France and Portugal, which were agrarian countries steadily, sought market for their produce in Asia as from the beginning of the fifteenth century.

The European uncertainty about their future in the Middle East made them to start thinking on ways to subdue the region. The opportunity to gain economic and political power in the region came in the early twentieth century with the disintegration and collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the invasion of its territories by the European powers. By the end of the First World War, Ottoman Turkey had lost most of its territories to Britain, France, Italy, Greece and other Western nations who divided these lands amongst themselves and turned them into colonial possessions. Thus, Britain came to possess the Persian Gulf region and modern Iraq, Kuwait, Jordan, Israel, Egypt and parts of North Africa. France established a mandate over Syria and Lebanon, while the US, Germany, Italy, Greece, and other lesser powers divided Turkey and its adjacent territories between themselves.⁴

A prolonged period of colonial rule in the Middle East thus begun, which lasted several decades and led to the development of nationalist sentiment and struggles that resulted in wars of national liberation and revolution by the 1940s and 1950s. Even as most of these colonies gained their independence after the Second World War, neo-colonial elements who remained within the Western imperial ambit were put in place.

Infact, many years after independence, Britain, France and other European powers began to prop up the emergent social formations in which European industrial capital played an important role, as many of the Asian states came to function as colonial outposts of Europe to protect Western business interest.⁵

Also, two distinct alliances set into motion the class dynamic of developments in the post independence period. In Lebanon, landlords and merchants tied to French capital were installed in power. Lebanon thus came to serve Western capital in a manner complementary to that of the newly established state of Israel. Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states also played a similar role in the region under British rule.⁶ In this context, control of oil, other raw materials and shipping became paramount in the struggle over control of the entire Middle East region.

The foregoing development, coupled with the deprivation of long established national and ethnic groups of their homelands due to the partition into colonial possessions, and the dispersal of these groups across national political boundaries as in the case of the Palestinians, the Kurds and the Armenians, had led to the rise of a militant nationalism that was characterized by armed struggles and military coups. While some states like Iraq began to rediscover their identity and pull down neo-colonial superstructures, countries like Turkey, Lebanon and Iran went into a closer alliance with foreign capital, which made them dependent on the West. This situation meant the existence in the region, of a multitude of power centres that were diverse in form and content: there were the military-backed regime in Turkey, the Royal Saudi States and Islamic fundamentalism in Iran. The Middle East therefore embraced both stability and change under the weight of rival

political forces. These forces have come to express contradictory class interests in a sea of turmoil, which lies beneath the surface manifestations of cultural uniformity that appears to characterise the region and its people.⁷

A major source of explosion in the Middle East has been the problem of Israel. As a matter of fact, the period from the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 to the present is replete with crucial events unfolding in a continuous drama of social and political struggles, war and revolution. The claim to existence by the Zionist state of Israel actually prompted the Arab confrontation that led to the first Arab-Israeli war 1948-49. With its headquarters in Cairo, Egypt, the Arab League confronted Israel in another war in 1973. The grouse of the Arabs was informed by the threat that an emergent powerful Jewish state would pose to Arab nationalism and imperialism.

The recognition accorded the state of Israel by the US and the European powers drew the ire of the Arabs who saw in the action, western conspiracy to prop up a powerful non-Islamic state to terrorise them.⁸ In the course of Arab-Israeli wars, Israel seized and occupied the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza strip, west bank and Syria's Golan Heights.

The aftermath of the war was the fleeing of hundreds of Palestinians to neighbouring Arab states, which created a major Palestinian question. Jordan, a pro-west country even flushed them out in 1971.⁹ Israel made life more difficult for the Palestinians in Southern Lebanon where they mainly concentrated. Arab nations tried to collectively use their oil power to checkmate, the spread of Western influence in the Middle East, but the division ideologically within the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) made this impossible. Moreover, Western countries remained the biggest buyers of oil from the Middle East. And this was particularly why their presence in the region was not only intensified, but also secured; a move necessitated by the quest to protect their economic and trade interests. Smaller Arab nations like Kuwait, Jordan, United Arab Emirates and

Syria whose abundant oil was their major source of revenue, preferred to court the West and seek their protection against predatory Arab states.¹⁰

The American sponsoring and installing of a puppet Shah rulership in Iran was another source of crisis in the Middle East. The Shah was a fascist dynamic regime, which throughout the 1960s and 1970s, collaborated with the US to hurl Iran into the pantheons of terror. The 1979 revolution, a violent one led by Ayatollah Khomeini of the Shiite Islamic sect, halted the pugnacious rule of the Shah dynasty. But the Shiite leadership did not end at that, it also went into confrontation with the Ba'ath leadership in neighbouring Iraq led by Saddam Hussein, which came into power nearly the same time with it. The Iranian authorities dismissed the Ba'ath government as an unislamic and a pro-US one.¹¹ Soon, Khomeini's policies clashed with the personal ambition of Hussein, culminating in 1980, in a war that lasted till 1988.

The consequences of the Iran-Iraq war were in themselves another cause of friction in the Arab sub-continent. Iraq, which had become weary and broke, sought new sources of revenue to lubricate a battered economy. This made her to re-open her chapter of claims over Kuwait in 1990.¹² her eventual invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1991, led to a major military campaign by the US-led Western forces that forced Hussein out of the oil enclave. Kuwait meant so much to US and Britain, her largest buyers of petroleum resources. With the Gulf war over in 1991, the Western powers with the aid of UN resolutions, which they sponsored, maintained their physical and military presence in Iraq and the gulf region. This initially generated controversy and seemed to breach the codes of international law and the uncodified principles of international morality, but soon became the accepted norm among the Asians, many of who had even viewed it as unwise to continue to display anti-Western posture. Iraq remained on her own and only got verbal support spasmodically.

In other parts of Asia, Japan, a growing power had come out of its isolation and had become a major economic power by 1990. Her capitalist system endeared the country to

the West and made her a major ally of Western Europe and the US. Indonesia, South Korea and Malaysia, three middle powers in Asia, were also close allies of the West. However, despite the collapse of communism in 1989 with Soviet Union breaking up thereafter, China, another power in Asia remained ideologically and politically distant from the West. This made the Bush and Clinton administrations respectively, continually court her and persuade the socialist states to come over to capitalist democracy. If china had been won over, the ‘pocketing’ of Asia would have been completed long ago.

PRELUDE TO THE SEPTEMBER 11, TERRORIST ATTACKS

It has become clear, I hope, why nations in Asia particularly the Middle East have so much resentment for the West, particularly the US. The American over-activeness in the region, which was to secure her economic interests and to fester her nests were most times responsible for crisis and instability that pervaded the area. Incidentally, the anti-Western animosity grew when government in Asia seemed to have lost out in the fight to protect their sovereignty from American neo-colonialism. The Arab League was no way out as the numerous pro-West members always ensured that US-friendly persons constituted the leadership.

These set-backs and frustrations made anti-American movement to slip off the hands of national leaders. Faceless groups, most times Islamic fundamentalists, took over. These groups began by making attacks on government buildings, military bases and public places as a way of registering their grievances. They also kidnapped government officials and school kids.

At this time, the attacks although sporadic, were not organised. However beginning from the early 1980s, groups on Lebanon, not directly associated with any government, became significant because of the leverage they gained by taking and holding hostages national of Western states.¹³ This form of attack became popular among Arab fundamentalists because of the way it shook Western nations.

The groups changed from attacking Arab structures to American and Western embassies, their personnel and property. Also, places like pubs, cinemas, schools and quarters where Americans and Europeans were in the majority came under attack. Western diplomats, journalists and residents were also either murdered or held hostage to enhance the bargaining power of the Arabs. Groups or individuals also hijacked passenger aircraft, which they used as bargaining chips.

Also, militia groups planted bombs on US aircraft and ships and sometimes gunned them down. The west saw all these new forms of 'nationalist liberation' movement as mere terrorism. It is pertinent to point out that nations that had tried and failed to stop Western imperialism in the past became the most auspicious places of refuge for the terrorist groups. It is equally important to note that even pro-western nations had their numerous anti-western elements moving into countries like Libya, Pakistan, Lebanon, Sudan and Palestine. It is not clear whether these governments physically aided the terrorists, but the US had always made the claim that Libyan, Palestinian, Iranian and Iraqi authorities had usually given them logistics, military and financial backing.¹⁴ The Lockerbie affair in 1987 was said to have been carried out with aid of Libya's leader, Ghaddafi himself. The 1998 bombing of American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya was said to have had Afghanistan Taliban's complicity.

The US however, often retaliated by combing the suspected countries and apprehending the culprits. Also anti-terrorist network was established in Israel and US-friendly Arab nations. The terrorist groups however, rather than diminish in number and be deterred by the American campaigns, such as the raids on Tripoli and Benghazi in Libya in 1989, became more enamoured and restive in terrorist activities.

The al-Qaeda terrorist network emerged against the background of America's tough anti-terrorist posture in Asia and the Middle East. Al-Qaeda is led by a Saudi-born multi-millionaire, Osama bin Laden, a well-educated Islamic fundamentalist who has been on exile in Afghanistan since 1996 following his expulsion by Saudi authorities for anti-American violence. The terrorist violence countermanded US' standards for global order.

The American idea of a world order is that in which nations, groups and international system exist in a world of security, freedom, democracy, free markets and growth.¹⁵ The existence of terrorist strongholds in Asia further stifled American business interests in that continent. American business interests ranged from the buying of oil to the exportation of exotic finished products and importation of electronic hardwares into and from the continent. The US was principally concerned about Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Indonesia, India, South Korea and Japan.¹⁶ These nations constituted the economic life-wire of the US in the East, but which has been greatly threatened by terrorist movement in the region.

That Afghanistan became al-Qaeda base was a product of history. The poor country had, for over two decades, been battered by European powers who were serving their national self-interest. Soviet Union invaded the country in December 1979 only to be forced out in 1988 after a long period of resistance put up by the Mujahidin, a war-active Muslim group. Although the Mujahidin declared the country an Islamic state, the country essentially became pro-west due to collaborators among the ranks who served Western interests. This was nauseating to a group of Afghan radical Islamic students, the Taliban, who fought their way to power and seized the control of more than half of the country. The establishment of the Taliban regime in 1996 commenced a strong anti-US posture from outside the traditional area of the Gulf. This period coincided with the sack of bin Laden from Saudi Arabia. Expectedly, bin Laden was readily admitted into Afghanistan as an exile as the Taliban and the Saudi dissident shared the same view of an emasculated western presence in the East and the defence of Islam from the claws of western Christian imperialism.

Afghanistan, a country rich in coal and natural gas, is unfortunately a very poor country, which was battered by a 20 years war experience. A country with a GDP of US \$1,467 million and US \$70 per capital in 1996, it recorded an annual average growth of 6.0% of GDP in the same year. It had an inflation rate of 56.7% in 1991, but recorded the worst in

1996 with an inflation rate of 400%.¹⁷ Afghanistan was a frustrated country economically and as such welcomed a radical change of government in 1996. Her traditional industries namely, agriculture and sheep raising diminished because of the wars and instead, narcotics became the principal export commodity became the largest producer of opium.

From the start of Taliban rule in 1996, a formidable armed opposition had steadily grown. For instance, the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (UIFSA) came into existence to plot Taliban's fall. All other opposition militias, by the alternate support of Western and Russian powers, came to form the Northern Alliance. The presence of bin Laden and the commitment of his resources and 'goodwill' to the Taliban regime had been the saving grace from 1996.

From that year up to mid 2001, terrorist attacks had become more sporadic, well planned, accurately hatched and multi-dimensional. Suicide bombing, suicide hijacks and assassinations became veritable forms of attack. The most recent before the September 11 attack was the bombing of the USS Cole earlier in the year in which 17 US sailors were killed. After this, bin Laden sent recruitment tape across the Middle East and Pakistan, persuading Muslims to join in prosecuting a holy war against the West. He had said,

*With small means and a great
Faith, we can defeat the mightiest
on earth.*¹⁸

SEPTEMBER 11 AND THE 'WAR' THEREAFTER

Anti-West campaigns had never been as far-reaching and devastating as the September 11, 2001 attacks on the USA. Terrorists had attacked residences, embassies, pubs, cinemas, stadia, planes, ships, and other public places etc., killing dozens or more. They had always carried out acts of terror on West's structures and personnel outside America or Europe. But for the first time in global history, a single terrorist act recorded so much destruction of lives and property in a single day and yet inside the US. What was more, the Pentagon, which represents America's military and strategic intelligence power

and the world Trade Centre (WTC) America's symbol of global capitalist power, were successfully attacked in suicide bombings carried out by Arab terrorists.

The Pentagon and WTC were, incidentally, not the only targets. But between 9.am and 9.20 am of that September 11, 2001, four commercial passenger jets crashed into the twin-towers of the WTC and into the Pentagon building. The planes en-route to Los Angeles included, American Flight 11 with 81 passengers and 11 crew, and American Flight 77 a Boeing 757, but 3,000 people were killed and thousands were severely injured.¹⁹

Nineteen people were later found out to have hijacked the planes and 50 people were involved in the whole operations.²⁰ In the subsequent investigations, a number of linchpins were identified and arrested. However, Mohammed Attah, a 33 year old shy, unassuming, but well educated Egyptian who was considerably close to the al-Qaeda was discovered to be the man in charge of the planting and execution of the suicide attacks.²¹

For sometime however, the American nation could not establish traces of their invaders. According to President G.W. Bush, the attackers were faceless enemies of freedom.²² But the US regarded it as an invitation to war, to comb the world, identify the enemy and destroy him. This is reflected in Bush's speeches (in parts):

The attacks which were carried out
against our country yesterday were
acts of war... Our grief has turned to
anger, and anger to resolution.
Whether we bring our enemies to
Justice or bring justice to our
Enemies, justices will be done.²³

After the burying of the dead victims of the September 11 attacks however, the US declared that she had uncovered her enemies:

*The evidence we have gathered all points to
A collection of a loosely affiliated terrorist*

*Organisations known as al-Qaeda...its goal is
Remarking the world and imposing its radical
beliefs on people everywhere.²⁴*

According to Bush, the terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics. Their doctrine inspires them 'to kill Christians and Jews, to kill Americans'.²⁵ The al-Qaeda was said to have an inspiring international network that had been responsible for anti-West terrorism from the 1980s. The group was linked to the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and over 60 countries.

The US mentioned Afghanistan as the base of the al-Qaeda movement, which had dozens of training sites for international terrorists. The movement, to the US, had steadily got the aid and refuge of the fundamentalist Taliban regime led by Mullah Omar. A four-point non-negotiable demand was thus made on the regime or face reprisal acts from the US government. The American government asked the Taliban to deliver up to all al-Qaeda members; release all foreign nationals and US citizens, protect foreign journalists, diplomats and workers; and deliver up all terrorist camps for their immediate destruction.²⁶

But the Taliban initially responded by denying that Osama bin Laden resided in Afghanistan, and subsequently agreeing that he was there, but that the US should provide proofs that he was responsible for the September 11 attacks. The regime also warned that if it did not cooperate with the US and the latter declared war on her, she too would swiftly respond with a holy war.²⁷

On September 21, the US government sought the approval of the Congress. Congress approved US \$40 billion and 50,000 reservist soldiers to fight terrorism.²⁸ President Bush declared aggression on Afghanistan and described the new war as a 'crusade', which quickly elicited concern from world leaders. 'Crusade' was a tem

used in medieval Europe to describe the wars by Christian Europe against Muslims in the Mediterranean.

Shortly after the declaration of Operation Infinite Justice, Osama bin Laden, on international television, declared to comment on his involvement in the September 11 attacks, but congratulated the attackers, saying justice had eventually come upon the Americans for their age-long atrocities against Islam. According to bin Laden, Americans deserved to suffer for the savage acts they had conspired with Israel to carry out against Arabs in Palestine, Iraq and other Muslim countries. Laden said the attacks would continue as long as the Islamic world remained under the gridlock of Christians from the west.²⁹

The US embarked on mobilisation of European, Asian and Arab countries from September 22, to October 6 and carried out her first strikes on October 7, attacking mostly, civilian quarters and few government strongholds.³⁰ The strikes thereafter, were sporadic, ceaseless and devastating.

ASIA'S REACTION TO THE SEPTEMBER 11, ATTACKS AND US' COUNTER ATTACKS

The news of the terrorist attacks were received with mixed reactions in Asian and Arab countries. While it was condemned in government circles, the strikes were appraised among many Arab citizens with jubilation. Several Muslim groups and sects in Palestine, Sudan, Pakistan, Iraq, China and even supposed pro-west Islamic countries like Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia welcomed the attacks. However, probably for diplomatic reasons, the governments condemned the jubilation, the attacks and promptly dissociated themselves from their citizens; action. Even in Palestine, a country with deep-seated hatred for Western nations, Yasser Arafat used the police against his own people. A number of Islamic clerics came out to deny any complicity in the strikes, saying the

terrorists were on their own and not in anyway acting for Muslims or in line with the solemn preaching of Prophet Mohammed.³¹

Of all the Asian countries, Pakistan was the most vocal against the terrorist strikes. This was unprecedented as Pakistan, a next-door neighbour of Afghanistan had always shared similar visions, aspirations and concerns as far as Islamic fundamentalism and anti-West posture are concerned. Pakistan even had al-Qaeda training camps and a considerable number of bin Laden's aides, a situation that had made the US to list the country as one of the World's leading terrorist bases. But probably wanting to be in America's good books for once, Perez Musharaf dissociated his country from Afghanistan and opened her arms in welcoming American actions against Afghanistan,³²

Jordanian, Lebanese and Indian authorities declared their support for a collective action against Afghanistan and even foiled terrorist attacks in their domains. India was however passive about the whole thing particularly because of the new-found friendship between Pakistan and the US.

Iraqis were initially very apprehensive when the US attacks began because of the avowed mission of the US to comb all the 60 countries, including Iraq, which were accommodating terrorists and bombard them until 'justice and freedom' prevail in the world. Moreover, Iraq saw the September 11 attacks as an opportunity for the American government to intensify its onslaught on the Saddam Hussein administration that it had always schemed to topple on the other hand. The Iranian government was however, reluctant to join issues with the US on the action against Afghanistan. Iran made it unlawful for any one to make an official statement on the development and rejected American proposal to negotiate with it on her programme of action against terrorism.³³ Iran particularly threatened to sack Iranian officials who offered to speak in favour of or to the US. According to Ayatollah Ali Khomeini:

*This is not just a prejudiced opinion.
It is an educated Assessment based on
thorough studies and experiences of other
countries. We have reached the conclusion
that not just relation, but any negotiation
with America is against the nation's interest.³⁴*

On the part of China, a socialist state that the Clinton administration had not-too-successfully brought into accord with US' interest and aspirations among the Asian Tigers and in the East generally, the American counter-attack had to be carefully done in such a way that civilians would not be affected and it would not appear religious or terrorist in nature.³⁵ According to Chinese authorities, the US must act only in accordance to United Nations and UN Security Council's resolutions, warning that the Chinese would not support any unilateral military action by the US.³⁶

The reason for China's cautious reaction is understandable. Aside from the fact that she is not, **strictu sensu**, a friend of the US, she is particularly bothers about the US setting up its troops permanently in Central Asia as she had done in Eastern Europe and Gulf Region. Second, a concentration of fundamentalist Islamic movements in the north-western region of Xinjiang in China would explode if China officially and effectively backed the US against an Islamic nation like Afghanistan.

Arab territories like Turkey, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan opened their doors for American military training and attacks against Afghanistan. They like several European countries such as Russia and Britain even provided logistics for the US operations in Afghanistan.

POWER AND STABILITY IN ASIA AFTER THE SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS

The very first casualty of US' policy to overthrow the **status quo** in Asia was Afghanistan. From the foregoing narrative and analysis, it has become apparent that because of the strong economic interests that the US and her Western allies have in the Asia region and the Arab sub-region, there has been much power play there to capture the continent and bring it under Western capitalist influence. Therefore, forces that proved a threat to the Western aspiration had, at different points in time, been put at bay by overt crushing through the use of force, or a covert one through the installation of pro-West leaderships. The crushing of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan was therefore, a major breakthrough for the Western powers. In its place was the US' puppet government headed by Hamid Karzai from the anti-Taliban northern section of the country. The interim government, sworn in on December 22, is expected to restore life to the war-ridden country.

The September 11 suicide attacks and the US' war against terrorism had an overbearing impact on Asia, the world and international relations. First, the Asian governments, realizing the enormity of the attacks on Pentagon and the WTC and sensing the reaction of the US, for the first time, came all out to condemn terrorism as they had never done before. Those nations which had never had it smooth with the US in recent times with the exception of Iran, did not only send condolences to the US government, but gave it the backing to retaliate. For instance, Afghanistan's neighbour and age-long ally, Pakistan said when she joined in the Western Coalition:

It was a big decision, a decision based on principle. Now that we are part of the coalition, the people of Pakistan expect that our concerns will be addressed.³⁷

Second, because the suicide attacks were responsible for the loss of lives, Islamic nations some of which ordinarily have applauded the acts either lent voices in

condemning them, distancing themselves from the attackers, or kept mute about the whole affair. Libya, Iraq and Sudan to mention but a few, just showed indifference in the beginning, most Muslim nations dismissed the acts as barbaric and extremely inhuman, adding that the attackers, though Muslims, were not acting on Islamic injunctions. Islam, they said abhorred violence and wanton killing of men.

The US campaigns and operations had more far-reaching consequences on power and stability in Asia. The September 11 strikes gave her the leeway to carry out a ploy she had nurtured for decades namely, establishing an active military presence in Asia to: protect her interests, dismantle old obstacles, and deter middle powers who had often competed with her in Asia. As such, middle powers in Asia, particularly those ones who had always opposed the west, either folded their arms and distanced themselves from acts that may compel the US to include them as targets in the anti-terrorist campaigns; or threw their weight behind the allies.³⁸

Again the campaigns caused a lot of tension, panic and civil unrest in a number of Asian countries, which nearly tore them apart. Quite unusually, Palestine went up in flames as the citizens were mightily crushed by Yasser Arafat's security men when they protested American bombing in Afghanistan, with placards inscribing "Death to America", and "Osama bin Laden, our hero". This was unprecedented in the history of Palestine as never was there any time that the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), latently or manifestly, protected Western interests like such. But the PLO did this for two reasons: First to eliminate any possibility of the US branding her a terrorist nation and attacking her thereafter and second, it was apprehensive of the fact that the daily riots might degenerate into a major political instability.

Furthermore, majority of Asian and Arab countries, in an unprecedented manner, joined the coalition forces against a fellow Asian nation. Although there was something similar to this in 1991, when a number of Asian countries that were traditionally pro-West joined Britain and the US in the Operation Desert Storm

against Iraq, in the Afghanistan experience, it was a league of unusual friends. Some nations did this because they are lesser powers who from time immemorial had remained uncomfortable in the midst of the imperialist and over-ambitious fellow Asian nations that are more powerful. Some had to join the coalition as a diplomatic means of courting the friendship of the US or renouncing the old hatred. Again the Pakistan shift comes readily to mind in this regard. Her joining the league may not be unconnected with the nuclear power tussles with India, her neighbour, over the years, with India enjoying a tremendous leverage from the US over her for several decades. She could also have done it to save her head as the US had long black-listed her.

There were therefore, new alliances and re-alignments in Asia and an alteration in the continent's power configuration. Traditional enemies became friends as a matter of expediency and old friends became new foes. The fear of US' reprisal act across the length and breadth of Asia, particularly 'terrorist bases' made them to promptly add voice to the anti-terrorist campaigns.

On the international scene, the US made more friends thereby resulting in the thinning of her enemies.³⁹ The whole world seemed to speak in one voice and it was in favour of the US. But this had its significance. It really goes to confirm the unipolarity of the global order and the sole leadership of the US in the new world order.

The US foreign policy in the Middle East seemed to become less popular since the strikes in Afghanistan came to an end. Its war on terrorism was therefore rekindled with George W. Bush's appeal to world sentiments to remove Iraq's Saddam Hussein. But a number of global powers, including France, Germany and Russia vehemently opposed the move, particularly when Iraq seemed to accommodate UN weapons inspectors who did not discover weapons of mass destruction nor secret sites of production. Right now, only the US and Britain have agreed on the option of

aggression against Iraq. What will likely result is another realignment among Arab nations, which may no longer be in favour of the West.

CONCLUSION

To my mind, the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US, unfortunate as it was, represented the height of cumulative hatred against US' role in what the Arabs considered the internationalizing of capitalism without minding whose ox is gored. That the attacks came from the Arabs is to further reinforce my earlier thesis that terrorism is the perversion of Arab neo-nationalism namely, resistance to Western domination and control of resources in the Middle East in a new age, but is very immoral. That any invader could enter America and attack the Pentagon and the WTC is to show that like the epic tale of the rise and fall of empires in history, America seemed to have reached the zenith of her power and diminishing returns had begun to set in. To worsen matters, America began another campaign to attack Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein, who is considered a future threat to world peace. This movement has earned the US enormous opposition from world powers including some of her traditional allies in the West, who see no justification to attack a nation that has been cooperating with UN weapons inspectors since 2002. It may therefore seem the US is recording a declining popularity even as she makes spirited moves to shoot herself back to reckoning. The global opposition to her war on Iraq, which seems to delay it, shows that the unipolar system is paving way for multipolarity. That means there are other significant powers that can positively checkmate US' global activities.

However, with the way relations patterns went in Asia, the hotbed of anti American sentiments, it is apparent that the region has also been captured by the west.

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