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Content :

Introduction

A Polarized Worldview post September 11

Indonesian Perceptions of the War against Terrorism

ASEAN and International Responses

The Role of the United Nations in the New Global Security Landscape

Concluding Remark

Abstract.

President Bush has implied that those who do not join the coalition are with the terrorists, and that those who harbor terrorists will be dealt with as if they were terrorists themselves. Meanwhile, as air strikes against Taliban positions in Afghanistan continued throughout recent months, the political aftershocks are clearly felt in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, as well as in Indonesia and the Philippines. These aftershocks have the potential to steadily erode the internal security of these countries. Prolonged social destabilization could lead to wider based street level support for a “West against the rest” viewpoint. Clearly, Indonesian foreign policy makers need to think carefully about how to manage Indonesia’s long term relationships with the US particularly in connection with the country's number one national concern : economic recovery. Indonesia needs the support of the US and other Western countries, whose roles in the IMF, the World Bank, the CGI and the Paris Club are crucial. But as innocent people are killed or wounded, anti-American (and anti-Western) sentiment could crystallize further.

The ASEAN Ministers, meeting in Singapore on 12 October, expressed their determination “ to combat the threats to international peace, security and humanity caused by terrorists attacks.” ASEAN should move faster to make the ASEAN Regional Forum more substantive work, including the issue of international terrorism and the concrete measures that the Forum participants can take together.

The UN Security Council has provided moral support for massive military retaliation against terrorism. But more and more dissenting voices are being raised, not only in countries with a Muslim population, but also in the West -- Germany’s Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder survived a vote of no confidence on the issue of the dispatch of German troops to Afghanistan with a very slim margin of only two votes. The UN General Assembly could take some of the wind out of the sails of terrorist propaganda by denying them an easy target: the lopsided and unjust policy of the United States and the West on the issue of the Middle East, with the question of Palestine at its very core. The countries of the developing world should take the diplomatic initiative of pushing for a rectification of this imbalance and injustice.

About the Author

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Introduction

A new challenge has arisen to review our thinking regarding the management of our foreign policy and diplomacy within the strategic environment that changed overnight following the September 11 attack. We are facing one of, if not the most serious of threats to international peace and security. On 11 September 2001, the US was the victim of a horrific act of terrorism and it is now leading an international coalition against terrorism and those it sees as accountable. For only the second time in just over 150 years, the US has suffered a direct attack on its own soil. The terrorists chose very sensitive targets: the WTC Twin Towers in New York, symbol of the might of US capitalism and, the heart of the US military, the Pentagon.

When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, the Japanese Admiral Yamamoto, in private, expressed his fear that the attack would only serve to awaken the fury of the powerful “sleeping giant”. His fears were proven right and within six months US military-industrial might made possible the turning of the tide in the Pacific. In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, just like after Pearl Harbor, the US is united and very patriotic in its war against terrorism. President Bush’ popularity rating soared to an unprecedented level of 92 per cent. However, we must be aware that the present situation is very different from any previous wars because the aggression does not stem from a state or an alliance of states. The suspects consist of a small group of people based in a single geographical location, Afghanistan, and having an international network of people with a clear ability to win sympathy for their cause. The motives of the terrorists could be discussed endlessly and inconclusively -- which is not the aim of this article. Here I will seek to identify the consequences for Indonesia's foreign policy and its relations with the US. This analysis is presented in the regional context of impact on members of the ASEAN and the role of the United Nations in the new global security landscape.

A Polarized Worldview post September 11

Every country and its government leaders are now faced with a grave dilemma, both domestically and internationally, mainly due to the implacable nature of the US government’s “with us or against us” policy and because of the nature of the targets of the September 11 attacks. Thanks to the continuous and intensive media coverage, the public is acutely aware of the devastating effects of the terrorist attacks and the ongoing US military retaliation. People are drawing their own views and conclusions and reacting according to their own perceptions of the various news reports. Within this highly charged atmosphere, Governments are confronted by one of the most difficult challenges of policy making and explaining their position to their respective parliaments and people.

In the short term, the US military retaliation will inevitably continue to dominate the news, while reports about humanitarian assistance and diplomatic efforts for a middle way within the UN receive scant attention. From the US perspective it is imperative that the US is seen to be punishing the terrorists and any government that is harboring the terrorists. However, it should be remembered that the Taliban and Osama bin Laden are not Afghanistan. The majority of the Afghan people have nothing to do with the atrocities committed by the terrorists and yet, in addition to the so-called “collateral damage” the local population is suffering. The little that had

remained of Afghanistan's infrastructure after two decades of war is now being bombed into oblivion.

President Bush has stated that the terrorists must be brought to justice and that any state harboring them must pay the price. He has even hinted that he is willing to expand the war against terrorism. Vice President Cheney has also talked about a war that "may never end – at least not in our lifetime". However, operationally speaking, how are these broad objectives going to be translated into achievable ones? What will be the consequences, in particular the unintended ones? Are we not flirting with global war and risking a clash of civilizations?

The attacks on Afghanistan appeared have two objectives, namely (1) to capture or kill Osama bin Laden and (2) to remove the Taliban and replace it with a new broad-based and viable Government in Afghanistan through which humanitarian aid and reconstruction can be organized. In pursuing this policy the US has stated that members of the international community are either with the broad coalition against terrorism, or with the terrorists. There is no room for a middle way. President Bush has thereby polarized the global situation, making it extremely difficult for a Non-Aligned nation such as Indonesia to preserve its independence of judgment and freedom of action and to contribute through a third or middle way. Ironically, this polarized world is exactly what Osama bin Laden also wants.

The Islamic world is not monolithic. There are Muslims and there are Muslim countries, but there is no tangible political entity as Islam. Osama bin Laden seems to believe that he can constitute this entity and the polarization by President Bush may actually facilitate bin Laden's own objective of driving the world towards a scenario of 'Islam vs. the West'.

The United States Government has been careful to point out that it is not waging war against Islam nor against the Arabs or any particular nation, but against terrorist networks and groups. This cuts no ice among many Muslims, some of them volatile minorities, even in countries that have declared themselves with the anti-terrorism coalition. As the war continues, there will be more and more damage and human suffering, which in turn will broaden and deepen anti-Western feelings.

There is a thinly veiled threat behind the statements of President Bush that those who do not join the coalition are with the terrorists, and that those who harbor terrorists will be dealt with as if they were terrorists themselves. Meanwhile, as the United States and the United Kingdom continued to carry out air strikes against Taliban positions in Afghanistan throughout the last months of 2001, the political aftershocks are clearly felt in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and other Arab allies of the United States, as well as in Indonesia and the Philippines. These aftershocks have the potential to steadily erode the internal security of these countries.

Osama bin Laden, Enemy No. 1 of the coalition, represents a credible threat against those countries siding with the United States. In view of this, countries that are already committed to the anti-terrorism coalition have to engage in a delicate balancing act. They cannot appear to go all the way with the Americans and the British in the anti-terrorist war. To be perceived as siding completely with the Americans would strengthen the anti-American feeling at the street level

which would complicate and make the governmental position of those countries with a large Muslim population such as Indonesia much more difficult.

The American threat is, of course, the more immediate threat and most effective when coupled with incentives. Even Yasser Arafat, who sided with Iraq during the Gulf War, has found the American promise of support for a Palestinian state irresistible. Whether this will have a positive long-term effect on hopes for peace in the Middle East or be remembered by history as another stopgap measure remains to be seen.

Indonesian Perceptions of the War against Terrorism

A continuation of the war against terrorism may be carried out in Southeast Asia. The United States Government has approved military support to fight terrorist groups in the Philippines. Already, military advisers have now arrived in the Philippines to help in the government's drive against the Abu Sayyaf, whose links with Osama bin Laden are well established. It is also eyeing Indonesia and Malaysia for their links with Osama bin Laden and the Al Qaeda organization.

Apart from the terrible casualties and the damage to infrastructure that the war against terrorism will cause, one of its worst effects could be a deepening of the global economic recession. South East Asia and Indonesia will be severely affected as they are reeling from the effects of the terrorist attacks of 11 September. The American consumer is not buying, the American tourist is staying at home, and foreign investors, whose capital is much needed by convalescing ASEAN economies, are sitting on their wallets. Hopes for an early and full economic recovery from the Asian financial crisis have vanished from the horizon.

As a result, prolonged social destabilization could lead to wider based street level support for a "West against the rest" viewpoint. Clearly, Indonesian foreign policy makers need to think very carefully about how to manage Indonesia's long term relationships with the US particularly in connection with our number one national concern : economic recovery. To return to stability and a healthy economy within a democratic framework, Indonesia needs the support of the US and other Western countries, whose roles in the IMF, the World Bank, the CGI and the Paris Club are crucial. But as the war effort intensifies and innocent people are killed or wounded, anti-American (and anti-Western) sentiment could crystallize further. As a result, President Megawati has been shifting her view on the US military action in Afghanistan away from the required steadfast American position despite the fact that she was initially supportive of the US stand at the time of her visit to Washington. It is encouraging to see in Jakarta and some other places that "anti-sweeping" groups are emerging lately. If such a movement grows, the Government will have an easier time. But for the time being it seems that situation will be getting worse, before getting better.

Under these circumstances there is a great need to be working with a sense of realism. It is true that interstate relations constitute relations of interdependence, but it has both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, it creates disincentives to conflict and encourages both sides to harmonize their respective views. But, on the negative side and especially during times of crisis, the unequal nature of the relationship gives the more powerful and less dependent state levers of influence that can be used against the less powerful and more dependent states . But the

less powerful also have the ability to influence. The US may be the only Super Power, but in the struggle to win the hearts and minds of Muslims the world over, the US needs the support of Indonesia, as the world's fourth most populous nation, and the largest nation in the world in terms of Muslim population. The US needs to have Indonesia on its side but Indonesia needs to play this card realistically and intelligently or the consequences could be disastrous for the economic recovery.

During the Cold War, the US understood how the strength of the Soviet Union posed a danger to the US. Now the US is learning how Russia's weaknesses also pose grave dangers to the US. The same observation could apply to Indonesia, because a weak and disintegrating Indonesia would be potentially unsettling to South East Asia and beyond. Security wise, the US would benefit if South East Asia remains stable, which to a large extent depends on the stability of Indonesia.

Indonesia needs to be assisted in every way possible, because it is in the regional strategic interests of the US and Indonesia's neighbors to have a stable Indonesia as the anchor of stability of ASEAN. Indonesia therefore needs to be able to position herself correctly in its balancing act. During her visit to Washington, President Megawati joined in the condemnation of the terrorist attack of September 11 and expressed her government's readiness to cooperate. But shortly after her visit to Washington, domestic circumstances compelled President Megawati to state that no country can attack another country for whatever reason. The reason behind this statement seems to be that Indonesia is concerned with a war with more innocent casualties, which would put the government of Indonesia in an increasingly difficult position as views within Parliament and outside shift towards an anti-war mode. But the Government of Indonesia needs not only to perform a delicate balancing act requiring a great deal of diplomatic skill, intelligence and tact but more importantly to convince its own people what Indonesia's national interests are and how to safeguard these interests. Indonesia's economic recovery depends on the IMF, World Bank, ADB, CGI and Paris Club where US influence is very strong. The dynamics of the situation however are in many respects difficult for the government to balance against the continued development of democratic practices in Indonesia. It is a dangerous situation with a lot of pitfalls and Indonesia and the US can not afford to be careless in making foreign policy statements. High-sounding statements reflecting noble aspirations do not guarantee diplomatic success. Policy statements need to take into account the national and international political and economic realities, along with the nation's capacity to bear the consequences of what is stated. In short, there is a need for a sense of realism.

ASEAN and International Responses

ASEAN had begun to address the problem of international terrorism well before the attacks of 11 September 2001, linking it to the problem of the traffic in illicit drugs and the smuggling of arms and people. But its moves had been slow and tentative, even with the regard to a form of terrorism that should be of grave concern: piracy in the South China Sea which is now organized with great sophistication and equipped with high technology. ASEAN should now move vigorously to address the general problem of international terrorism and the specific problems posed by pirate groups, which clearly underline the porous nature of borders within ASEAN requiring coordinated efforts to police effectively.

The ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime held in Singapore on 12 October, expressed in a statement their determination “ to combat the threats to international peace, security and humanity caused by terrorists attacks.” As a further step, ASEAN should make the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) move faster into more substantive work. It should now be possible for ASEAN to make a strong move to bring into the agenda of the ARF the issue of international terrorism and the concrete measures that the Forum participants can take together about it.

ASEAN should now also move faster with its own economic integration not only through its well-known economic incentives (AFTA, AIA, etc.) but also by helping the latest four members of the Association catch up with the founding members with regard to institutional and human resources capabilities.

Even when the operations in Afghanistan have attained their stated aims of capture or death to Osama bin Laden and the establishment of a new broad-based government in Kabul, there is the possibility that military operations against terrorist networks or regimes that coddle them could be carried beyond Afghanistan, possibly in Iraq this time. Even the United Kingdom has signified that it would balk at such an enterprise but in the afterglow of a victory over the Taliban, adventurism on the part of the US and its allies cannot be ruled out. Such initiatives could serve to further consolidate American political unity, or to suddenly obliterate it.

Most governments, however, have had to weigh the impact of their support for the US-led military operations in Afghanistan on the sensibilities of their own citizens, especially those governments with considerable Muslim constituencies. Thus the kinds of support that governments extended to the US-led military operation in Afghanistan ranged from the total support given by the United Kingdom and Pakistan, through non-combat support offered by Japan, to lip service and tokenism from certain other countries. Only Iraq vocally came out against the United States-led coalition.

At the street level, however, in countries where there are Muslim majorities, there is a surge of anti-war, anti-US and even anti-West feelings. Such feelings are not limited to Muslim populations, although they may not be as strong in other places as in the Middle-Eastern Muslim countries. If the incident in Latvia, in which a 16 year old girl slapped the Prince of Wales with a flower as a gesture of protest against the war in Afghanistan, means anything at all, it can only be that there is a great deal of popular disapproval if not condemnation of the US-led military action in Afghanistan in many parts of the world.

It has to be pointed out, on the other hand, that the angry backlash against the US-led military operation in Afghanistan has neither been as massive nor as violent as it once was feared it could be. Even the vaunted anti-war protests in Pakistan, which were once cited as capable of bringing down President Pervez Muechsarraf, have petered off. In Indonesia, the rowdy anti-US demonstrations that initially seemed to unnerve the Megawati Government, have ceased altogether. This is not to say that there are no strong anti-American, anti-West feelings in the Muslim world. But neither is there a groundswell of fundamentalist rage. One factor that has worked in favour of the US and the West in this case is their effective use and, perhaps, control of international mass media. Moreover, the Taliban did not succeed in making a strong case about the killing of civilians in the carpet-bombing operations of the US-led coalition. The decisive

factor, though, is the fact that most Muslims are still trying to survive and to modernize within the embrace of more reasonable forms of Islam.

Another consequence of the September 11 attacks is that countries that are grappling with separatist movements—like Russia, China and Indonesia—have exploited the global concern over terrorism by lumping the separatist rebellions confronting them with terrorist circles. The general and ultimate effect could be an increase of repression against political oppositions everywhere as the United States and the rest of the West become more concerned with the threats of terrorist cells and less sensitive to human rights violations. This means that the US and the West could be more tolerant of human rights violations by regimes that are tough on terrorists. Even in the United States, the emphasis now is on the need for military tribunals to try suspected terrorists, a departure from normal due process. And there is even some speculation, among American intellectuals on the application of torture to extract information from terrorists. In this notion, the torture will not be carried out by the Americans but by their less squeamish allies who can be relied on to be tough on terrorists.

Very illustrative of the new global security constellation is the change in the attitude of the United States and the West towards Pakistan's General Pervez Musharraf: from military dictator to the bold and courageous friend of the United States and the West, as eulogized by US Secretary of State Colin Powell. The US view of the Indonesian military has also undergone considerable change: with some hedging, it has become less critical and more understanding, in deference to the fact that President Megawati needs the TNI to deal with an Al Qaeda network in Indonesia, which the US probably suspects as already operational in the country.

The Role of the United Nations in the New Global Security Landscape

So this newly rampant threat of terrorism has created a new global security landscape and now requires a new security approach. What should be the UN response to this threat? For the time being and so far, the role of the United Nations in the international response to the threat of terrorism has been mostly decorative. Hopes for a resurgence of the role of multilateralism in international affairs following the end of the Cold War have been declining steeply for some time. The UN, through the Secretary General, has expressed the view that the US retaliation was justified on grounds of self-defense, and thus gave blanket fiat to the American military operation in Afghanistan. The Security Council had simply provided moral support for massive military retaliation against terrorism. But more and more dissenting voices are being raised. Though Germany's Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder survived a vote of no confidence on the issue of the dispatch of German troops to Afghanistan, the slim margin of two votes that saved him showed how divided are the views on this issue in the German Bundestag. Many governments will have an uneasy time in the course of this debate even in the West but more so in the Islamic countries and in countries where Muslims are significant minorities, such as Thailand and the Philippines.

In the meantime, it may appear that the US-led coalition is about to score a relatively quick victory against a non-state entity consisting of a small group of people with a well-coordinated international network. But even if Osama bin Laden himself were captured or killed, that would not be the end of the terrorist threat, especially if he managed to become a martyr. If captured, his trial could serve as his propaganda vehicle. If a military tribunal mutes the trial so that there is a perception of a lack of due process, that, too, would be another form of martyrdom that would be

welcome to him and his followers. If he is killed in action, so much the better for the cause of his martyrdom. That could mean the advent of a batch or several batches of young Muslims committed to emulating their martyred hero and to doing violence against the Western world. To be sure, they would represent a minority in the Muslim world, but there would be enough of them to ensure that Afghanistan had been bombed to a rubble for nothing.

The Western world and the international community must learn to communicate not only with Arabs and Muslims but all peoples in the developing world whose desperation could goad them to acts of terror. And the fundamental message that must be communicated is that there are feasible alternatives to violence so that their aspirations could be fulfilled here on earth rather than in a martyr's paradise. That would require a massive communication campaign in which United Nations agencies could play an important role.

In the UN General Assembly, some of the wind could be taken out of the sails of terrorist propaganda by denying them an easy target: the lopsided and unjust policy of the United States and the West on the issue of the Middle East, with the question of Palestine at its very core. The countries of the developing world—organized into such groupings as the Non-aligned Movement, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, ASEAN, etc.—should take the diplomatic initiative of pushing for a rectification of this imbalance and injustice. It is true that the United States and the United Kingdom have begun to pressure Israel into taking a more reasonable approach to the question of Palestine, but already there are Arab fears of an “about face” on the part of the United States. The US must change the perception that it is incorrigibly pro-Israel even when Israel is clearly on the wrong. It must convince the non-Western world that it is pro-freedom and not just the guardian of Israeli interests. Once the Palestine problem is resolved—in the sense that Palestine State is to be established with a definite time-table, the Osama bin Ladens will be less able to capitalize on the grievances of the Arabs. Naturally there would still be problems after that, but the international community would be able to function on a more comfortable basis and concentrate on the more important work of peace-building the world over.

Concluding Remark

Under the Clinton Administration, the US pushed hard for democratic reform and human rights. The Bush administration, with reduced enthusiasm for pushing reformist visions, has confirmed the Republican reputation for pursuing interests rather than ideals. But, waging a global anti-terrorist war, the Bush Administration is now compelled to be internationalist. While it is now using the UN only to the extent necessary, the changing global circumstances will make it imperative that the struggle against terrorism be a genuinely multilateral one. Moreover, that struggle can only succeed if it is able to get at and eliminate the root causes of terrorism, which, in the case of the Arab world, has a great deal to do with the lopsided and unjust policy of the United States and the West on the issue of the Middle East and the Palestinian question at its core. And that can only be successfully carried out by a coalition that is much broader than the one that fought in Afghanistan, a multilateral force that is not just military but also religious, cultural and educational. It has to be a total war, not in the sense that it must use overwhelming force, but in the sense that it must cover not only many fronts but also the totality of life. It must deal with fears, anxieties, aspirations, wounded pride, the pain of years of humiliation, and where there is despair, it must be able to offer hope, which is the real antidote to terrorism. Nobody who has any hope for himself and for his loved ones in this life can be a suicide bomber.