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ABSTRACT

Focusing largely on the Southeast Asian region, this paper investigates the developments since the September 11, 2001, attacks both from the side of the government and from the people. Governments in the region consider it strategically, politically, and economically beneficial to support the United States in its war against terrorism. This was the case in the attack against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Southeast Asian governments are still largely supportive of the United States in its war against Iraq, despite opposition from France, Germany, Russia, and China. Asian people on the other hand, either individually or represented by academia, NGOs, and others organizations, do not feel empowered to influence their governments' actions. Muslim communities, in particular, feel left out. Even in the large Muslim countries of Indonesia and Malaysia, the political leaders are unable to support the anti-war pressure of the people, despite the risk of being perceived as a supporter of the United States. Even the multiple anti-war protests, outside United States embassies in various countries, have failed to change the governments' position. This paper will discuss the developments that influenced the Southeast Asian region since September 11, 2001, and investigate some of the implications and tensions between the people and governments in Southeast Asia.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In Asia, September 11th translated into immediate sympathy for the lives lost and support for the United States. In fact, the president of the largest Muslim country in the region, Megawati of Indonesia, was one of the first to visit the United States. Pakistan immediately pledged support for the war against terrorism. This was followed by the swift implementation of anti-terrorism resolutions agreed on by the United Nations Security Council. A host of proposed anti-terrorism legislation was introduced in the region to enhance security measures. These include the ability to trace money transfers, increased authority for the police to hold people in custody without charging them with a particular offense, and stiffer penalties for terrorism related offenses.

However, it soon becomes clear that as far as Asia was concerned, there were clearly two broad divisions. At one level, there is the viewpoint of governments and sitting regimes, and on the other level is the perspective of the people. It is clear that both are different. Governments see it as being in their strategic political, economic, and military interest to support the United States in its war against terrorism. It was the case in the attack against on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. On the question of war with Iraq, the governments are still on the side of the United States, despite of the opposition of other large countries such as France, Germany, Russia, and China. Some governments are willing to add the qualifier that going to war should require prior U.N. approval; others do not take a public stand.

On the other hand, the people, either individually or represented via academia, NGOs and others do not feel empowered to act in any way to influence their governments. Muslim communities, in particular, feel most left out. Even in the large Muslim countries of Indonesia and Malaysia, the political leaders will not give in to the pressure of the people in spite of the risk of being seen as siding with the United States. During the attack on Afghanistan and the run up to the Iraq crisis, there have been numerous anti-war protests, largely outside United States embassies; however, these have not been effective in changing the position of the governments. This paper looks at the developments that hit the Southeast Asian region since September 11, 2001, and outlines some of the implications and tensions between the people and the governments.

II. TERRORIST NETWORK IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Southeast Asia claimed its link to the September 11, 2001, bombings in the United States with the arrests of alleged terrorists in Malaysia and Singapore in December 2001. An amateur videotape which was discovered in Afghanistan showed, as a possible target of attack, a subway station in Singapore where United States personnel would pass en route to the United States naval logistic facility.

Later, a document titled "Jihad Operation in Asia," purportedly uncovered by Indonesian intelligence, was reported by Singapore's Straits Times as including plans for simultaneous attacks on United States targets in Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Singapore's intelligence services, under the political control of the People's Action Party (PAP), linked those arrested and detained in Singapore to an alleged larger regional terrorist network that includes the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand.

From these exchanges of intelligence, the Kumpulan Mujahideen Malaysia (KMM), Abu Sayyaf and Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Philippines, Laskar Jihad in Indonesia and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) were in one way or another attributed to having had links to Osama bin Laden and the al Qaeda network. Information obtained from interrogating the detainees by the Singaporean authorities alleged that members of the JI received training in Afghanistan and Mindanao and also received funding from al Qaeda.

Based on this and other information provided by Singapore authorities, arrests were made in the Philippines. Father Rohim Al-Ghozi was arrested in January 2002, on charges of importing explosives. Al-Ghozi, a former student at Ba'asyir's boarding school, was soon identified as JI's bomb expert and accused of involvement in various bombings across the region. Abu Bakar Bashir was identified as the spiritual head of JI. Abu Bakar Baasyir has been accused of being responsible for unsolved bombings in Indonesia and the Philippines over the last few years, including explosions in Jakarta and Manila in December 2000 that killed thirty-five people. The latest has been his alleged link to the Bali bombings. His former student, Nurjaman Riduan Isamuddin, known as Hambali, is said to be the leader of the KMM.

Additional intelligence information gathered through interrogating those in custody was reported to place Malaysia as a site that used to receive Al Qaeda operatives en route to the September 11th bombing. Almost on a daily basis in Asia, new bits of information emerge that there has been evidence of exchange of training, money, and networking among the various groups identified above in the region and elements in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Indonesian archipelago, being home to the world's largest Muslim community, has been repeatedly cited as harbouring terrorists, including the leader of the Laskar Jihad and the head of Jemmaah Islamiyah. Pressure was applied on Indonesia by the United States, Singapore, and Malaysia following the arrest of alleged Islamic militants in the latter two countries. The Indonesian government showed some reluctance to act, and Vice President Hamzah Haz held highly publicized meetings with the leaders of alleged terrorist groups, afterward declaring that there are no terrorists in Indonesia. The official Indonesian response has been that Indonesia will handle the situation in its own way and attempts to introduce an Anti-Terrorism Bill in Indonesia were initially met with resistance. Meanwhile, Malaysia and Singapore have made more arrests.

On the other hand, a meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference convened by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir in Kuala

Lumpur in April 2002, issued a declaration unequivocally condemning acts of terrorism but failed to reach agreement on how to define terrorism. At the same time it also adopted a resolution that specifically rejected the idea that Palestinian resistance to Israel was terrorist in nature.¹

But the bombing of two night clubs in Bali, with over 180 confirmed deaths in the explosions of Oct. 12, 2002, brought attention back on JI and refocused the terrorist threat back to the region. Suspicion falls on al Qaeda and JI but the alleged JI leader, Abu Bakar Baasyir, denies any involvement or connection to al Qaeda, past recent evidence points to the contrary. Since then, Indonesia has arrested more than a score of people, including Abu Bakar Baasyir, over direct and indirect links to that case.

As the United States led momentum in the war against Iraq grew stronger in March 2003, there were a slew of demonstrations outside United States embassies in various Southeast Asian capitals. These demonstrations have taken place largely in countries with significant Muslim communities such as Indonesia and Malaysia but also elsewhere in Thailand and the Philippines.

Although other countries in the region, such as Burma, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, are largely seen as not having or contributing to a terrorist threat, developments in the other countries of the region are seen differently. This has allowed Southeast Asia as a whole to be dubbed as an alleged terrorist hub, and therefore an extension of the United States war on terrorism.

III. UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS IN ASIA

Post-September 11th, development refocused United States interest in security matters in Southeast Asia. In the case of the Philippines, this has led to the stationing again of United States troops in the Philippines, to support the government's military efforts in the Muslim south. "Countering terrorism" led to an initial deployment in February 2002, of 500 U.S. Marines on Basilan Island to conduct counter-terrorist training for the Philippines Army fighting the Abu Sayaf. In April 2002, 160 additional U.S. Special Forces troops arrived in the Philippines to reinforce the anti-terrorism activities in the same area. With allegations that this violates the country's 1987 constitution, the American soldiers' presence divided not only public opinion but also the government, a fact made clear in mid-2002 with the ousting of Vice-President Teofisto Guingona from his cabinet post as foreign minister.

The Philippine government has so far approved the U.S. force's presence only for a limited period to train the Philippine military to effectively combat terrorism, and not to engage in combat. At the end of July, the 500 U.S. troops deployed in February, left the Philippines but new joint

1. *Death Wish*, WASH. POST, Apr. 4, 2002, at 14, available at 2002 WL 17587541.

Philippines – U.S. military exercises were scheduled for October. But early in October, an American soldier was killed in Zamboanga City, Philippines when a nail bomb delivered by a local motorcyclist exploded in his face. His death forced the Defense Department to acknowledge that some 260 Special Forces “military advisors” remain in the predominantly Muslim province of Mindanao, following the conclusion of the six-month U.S. – Philippine joint military operation². There have been sporadic reports of clashes with Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) separatist guerrillas but Philippine and U.S. security officials constantly deny that American troops fight alongside Filipino soldiers.

On another front, FBI Chief Robert Mueller visited Indonesia in March and June 2002. In Singapore, former U.S. Ambassador to Indonesia, Paul Wolfowitz, called explicitly for a renewed U.S. engagement with the TNI, the Indonesian Armed Forces.³ The Bush administration had sought congressional approval to extend eight million dollars to train an Indonesian anti-terrorism unit as a way of extending American influence. Congress, however, had imposed restrictions on cooperation with the TNI because of the history of human rights abuse by the military. The United States has however achieved some success in influencing matters in Indonesia in terms of providing security training for the Indonesian police and military. For instance, in January 2003, the United States Senate voted not to restrict a program for Indonesian military officers to come to the United States for training and education.

Nevertheless, Indonesia and Malaysia – though burdened that they are home to Islamic radicalism – will not welcome U.S. troops because neither wants the domestic backlash. Realizing that it may be difficult to successfully engage all the states in the region bilaterally because of possible political fallout, the United States has focused instead on winning collective support from ASEAN on responding to terrorism. On August 2, 2002, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell signed a non-binding agreement with ASEAN that includes support for a tightening of border controls and recognizes the need for a unified approach to stop the flow of terrorist-related material, money, and people. Yet days later, in Jakarta, Powell emphasized the desire of the U.S. administration to resume its cooperation with the Indonesian military, announcing a sum of \$50 million assistance “over the next few years” to go mainly to the Indonesian police.

Meanwhile, Singapore remains the staunchest supporter of the United States. Singapore hosts a naval logistic base and has U.S. logistics personnel on the island. Singapore also has an overwhelming Chinese majority, nearly eighty percent, hence it sees the overwhelming Muslim majority of Indonesia

2. See Jordan Green, *U.S. Troops in Philippines*, Z MAG., Dec. 2002, available at <http://www.zmag.org/ZMagSite/Dec2002/green1202.htm>.

3. Paul Wolfowitz, *Making Friends, Taking Aim*, FAR E. ECON. REV., June 20, 2002, at 22, available at 2002 WL-FEER 5170146.

and Malaysia as threat. Even its minority Muslim population is treated with distrust and as a source of potential instability, hence the strong U.S. support. Its citizens, especially the Chinese community are largely pro-United States, making it an exception in the region. Singapore's tight control over freedom of expression also prevents minority voices to emerge by way of anti-war protests against the United States or the ruling PAP. On February 15, 2003, Singapore police prevented six people from carrying anti-war placards for an anti-war protest outside the U.S. embassy. The six had received an SMS, or text message, on their mobile phones to gather outside the U.S. embassy to protest against the U.S. led war on Iraq.

The dominant role of the United States in almost every sphere of global activity has resulted in increasing dissatisfaction with United States unilateralism generally, not just its insistence on playing the leading role in the international response to terrorism. There are voices in the region that are specifically vocal about the United States' position on Palestine and the debate in U.S. government circles about an offensive strike against Iraq. There is also unhappiness over United States' refusal to submit its troops to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. The net outcome is that United States unilateralism is stirring popular resentment in the region of the United States and its foreign policy.

IV. ASEAN, TERRORISM AND SEPTEMBER 11TH

In 1997, the Asian economic crisis was seen as revealing the ineffectual nature of ASEAN but also as presenting a challenge to ASEAN to "get its act together." One of the after-shocks from September 11th in the region concerns the revelation, once again, of the inadequacy of regional mechanisms. Since September 11th, there have been new calls to update ASEAN and there has been a flurry of activity to try to show ASEAN as moving purposefully again. In particular, the ASEAN Regional Forum has been once again brought up as a possible platform for considering long term security challenges posed by terrorism and transnational crimes.

Five years since the economic crisis, ASEAN sees the same lack of preparedness to respond effectively to the new crisis. The question raised is why ASEAN did not detect connections between regional Islamic elements and the September 11th bombing in the United States. There is recognition that there is a need for increased transnational cooperation. Although issues such as transnational crimes had surfaced at regional meetings, cooperation had been slow. For instance, in the run up to the outbreak of September, there were already issues of human trafficking, the drug trade, and weapons sale on the regional conference circuit. However, ASEAN has emphasized the principle of non-interference in member states' domestic affairs and this has been utilized by many of the member states to safe-guard their authoritarian regimes. State internal security surveillance was central to regime security; however, this created an intelligence system obsessed with identifying regime

opponents but which failed to provide earlier detection of activities of Islamic militants. The structure of a "surveillance state" has a built-in system that blinds their ruling regimes to anything other than what they want to see.

Additionally, scholar-bureaucrats nurtured by the ASEAN system through their lack of critical research and their willingness to celebrate the façade of regional cooperation expounded by ASEAN's leaders exacerbated the problem. ASEAN intelligence community reflect the same syndrome: intelligence failed to detect the development of linkages between regional Islamic militant groups and Al Qaeda because this was something not on the agenda of concern to ASEAN leaders. Recent belated attempts to initiate cooperation on terrorist issues in terms of sharing intelligence and instituting cyber security, raise the question whether it can be effective given the limited structure of cooperation within ASEAN.

Ideas have been put forward by a Singapore-based think-tank on how to promote the ASEAN Regional Forum as a region-wide security group able to assist in dealing with the terrorist threat. In particular, the appointment of a well-connected Singaporean diplomat as the new secretary-general of ASEAN starting in 2003 for a period of five years is likely to see a push in this direction. In fact, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia, three of the five founding members of ASEAN, agreed in May 2002 to share intelligence, resources, and personnel to fight terrorism. Fellow ASEAN members Thailand and Cambodia have also signed the pact. Brunei's expressed interest in joining a Southeast Asian anti-terror pact in January 2003. Yet it is interesting to note that many of the countries in ASEAN do not have extradition treaties. In the case of several arrests that had taken place in Singapore and Indonesia, the respective police representatives were allowed into fly into the others' jurisdiction to question the suspects. Often deportation is articulated as an option in lieu of extradition arrangements.

The move to link up with the European Union and ASEAN for further security cooperation is another example of this trend. An outcome of the United States' retaliation against the September 11 terrorist attacks is the slowdown in dialogue between European & Asian societies within the framework of the ASEM-process. Before September 11th, a lively dialogue between governments and civil societies in Europe and Asia had started from top-level government meetings to grassroots-level community activities. Since September 11th, this process has been neglected as the dynamics have shifted to the United States led war on terrorism. However, things took a different turn when foreign ministers of the European Union and the ASEAN adopted a joint anti-terrorism declaration on January 27, 2003. They vowed to upgrade links between their law enforcers in a joint fight against terrorism and organized crime in particular through cooperation between their police and security agencies, such as Eurapol and its Southeast Asian equivalent, Aseanapol.

However, the reality is that there is a trend for most member states of ASEAN to move toward unilateral and bilateral actions to pursue their

individual interests. In fact, the majority of the ASEAN member countries still fear that strengthening a regional mechanism threatens their sovereignty. Additionally, some of the member states have in mind different versions of a regional grouping, such as Mahathir Mohamad's call for an East Asian Caucus. Even in a climate of "terrorist" threat, countries in ASEAN have bilateral problems. There is the ongoing war of words between Malaysia and Singapore over water and territorial claims over the islet, Pedra Blanca. Cambodia and Thailand also went into a diplomatic row over the burning of the Thai embassy and business establishments in Phnom Penh in January 2003.

Far from representing a potentially effective regional cooperation structure, ASEAN is substantially a façade reflecting a romantic vision of a handful of academics and peripatetic regional conference circuit speakers without either popular roots or strong state backing. This absence of a driving force behind ASEAN results in those who have served in the ASEAN secretariat, at the end of their tenure, usually expressing the view that what ASEAN needs is a stronger secretariat! As a result, the people's voices are not adequately heard or effectively represented.

V. CONCERNS FROM THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

The dominance of government voices in the war against terrorism and the political decision to side with the United States hides a mixture of voices and issues in the Southeast Asian region but which does carry with an strong undertone of anxiety expressed by the Muslim community in the region.

For instance the argument that terrorism is best handled by getting to the root causes is one example. Many feel that the threat of radical Islamic terrorism is not something that can be neutralized by military measures alone. Further that an overly military emphasis would actually inflame Muslim opinion, further increasing sympathy for Muslim militants and thereby destabilizing the multi-ethnic, multi-religious polities in the region. There are two categories of concern. One concern lies in the desire to explore an alternative to retributive measures to cope with international terrorism and reduce the threat of war. A political alternative to the use of violence in response to terrorism is encouraged.

However, the voices of peace activists in Asia were largely muted as they are traditionally not very well known or prominent. Hence, both in terms of the war on terrorism and the possible attack on Iraq, a non-aggressive approach is preferred. The concern stems from the academia and those who were from the anti-globalization movement. They interpret the September 11th attack as symbolizing a widely felt discontent with the "globalization world order." Terrorism was seen as arising from surging global poverty and recommendations were made that this issue be dealt with effectively. In this respect, counter-terrorist strategies were urged to include the elimination of the root causes of poverty. However, this is increasingly rejected by some

government in the region (taking a similar line with the United States) that those involved in such terrorist activity are well educated and well off.

The mass media coverage of the September 11th attacks, simplifying dangerously equated global terrorism with Islam, vastly expanding the political profile of the global Islamic community and its internal sects and political sub-groups. To some extent, the “dumbing down” of the media had a part in zooming in on the militant image of Islam. The Western media comments on Islam, and their loose equation of Islam, fundamentalism, and terrorism was immediately, and often provocatively, syndicated world-wide, including in Islamic communities throughout the world. With Islam being so prominent in the region, and given the ethnic and religious diversity of so many of the countries in the region, peace-loving Muslims have had to struggle to disassociate themselves and Islam from terrorism.

In Southeast Asia, Muslims now feel threatened and highly vulnerable. In a region where Islam has been of an accommodating kind, defensive reactions to the targeting of the Muslim community has increased support for more fanatical Muslim organizations. Part of the problem with the image of Islam in the region has to do with the inability of moderate Muslims as well as peace and inter-faith activists promoting tolerance and understanding to project their message. Since September 11th, there have been a number of meetings of academics, activists and religious leaders in the region, but with few exceptions these achieve little or no public impact.

As a result it has increased racial and religious profiling within the region. It is not uncommon to hear stories that Muslim women who wear the headscarf or Muslim men sporting a beard are subject to greater scrutiny at immigration points as well by security agencies in the region. Realizing that this is a problem, attempts have also been made to have more inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue to ensure that more divisions with the communities are not introduced in what is already a very diverse region. Thus, it is not uncommon to hear calls from the ground to reject any attempt to associate terrorism with any religion, race, or nationality. But the U.S.-led war on terrorism has not been helpful towards this end.

VI. SEPTEMBER 11TH'S IMPACT ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

The fight against terrorism immediately was used to justify a series of controversial policies in the United States, including tougher immigration laws, curtailment of civil liberties, bypassing of normal legal procedures, and increased spending on the military and on intelligence. The United States – following September 11th – has detained “material witnesses” and held hundreds of unnamed illegal immigrants from Islamic countries in undisclosed

locations for undeclared reasons.⁴ The British government, too, is seeking to widen its legislated powers of detention. The proposed law, which drew protest from human rights activists, allows the indefinite detention or deportation of a (terrorist) suspect to a third world country.⁵

Meanwhile, governments in the region, reflecting the mood of the United States "war on terrorism," now feel encouraged to extend old internal security arrangements and emphasize the military response to regional separatist movements.⁶ This benefits authoritarian regimes in the region as they can use the war on terrorism to pursue their own domestic political agenda. Authoritarian regimes especially have seized the opportunity to assert that their on-going concern for national security has been vindicated. The region's governments were quick to use the new United States concern with terrorism as an effective excuse to renew and extend their curtailment of civil liberties and projects that civil liberty movements in the region will experience a setback.

The deputy prime minister of Malaysia, for example, recently praised the value of the country's Internal Security Act (ISA) in combating threats in the light of September 11th.⁷ The ISA has been used by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad to detain supporters of jailed former deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim and members of Malaysia's Islamic Party. As a result, political opposition and peaceful dissent are now more than ever at risk of being crushed (with popular support) after being branded as terrorist movements. Prime Minister Mahathir has seized a number of well publicized opportunities to argue that "the real Islam is not about extremist politics."⁸ He also uses such occasions to attempt to discredit the opposition Pan Malaysia Islamic party (PAS) which governs the states of Kelantan and Terengganu and

4. See R. Chandrasekaran & P. Finn, *U.S. Skirts Law on Terror*, INT'L HERALD TRIB., Mar. 12, 2002. See Steve Fainaru, *U.S. Jail is Harsh Place for Terror Detainees*, INT'L HERALD TRIB., Apr. 18, 2002, available at <http://www.iht.com/ihtsearch.php?key=terror+detainees> (last visited Mar. 24, 2003). See also Steve Fainaru & Amy Goldstein, *U.S. Detention Tactic is Illegal, Court Rules*, INT'L HERALD TRIB., May 2, 2002, available at <http://www.iht.com/ihtsearch.php?key=fainaru> (last visited Mar. 24, 2003).

5. Eric Pfanner, *U.K. Seeks to Widen Powers of Detention*, INT'L HERALD TRIB., Nov. 12, 2001, at 2, available at 2001 WL 28584976 (last visited Mar. 20, 2003).

6. See Michael Richardson, *Asian Regimes Appear to Use War on Terror to Stem Dissent*, INT'L HERALD TRIB., Nov. 21, 2002, available at 2001 WL 28585146 (last visited Mar. 20, 2003); see also Barry Wain & Kuala Lumpur, *Southeast Asia: Wrong Target: The United States has returned to Southeast Asia in search of villains but is finding itself involved in local disputes that may have little to do with international terrorism; So it's no surprise to hear critics say that the U.S. is being clumsy and misguided*, FAR E. ECON. REV., Apr. 18, 2002, available at 2002 WL-FEER 5169853.

7. Michael Richardson, *War on Terror or War on Dissent?*, INT'L HERALD TRIB., Nov. 21, 2002.

8. Mahathir bin Mohamed, *The Real Islam is Not about Extremist Politics*, INT'L HERALD TRIB., Feb. 8, 2002, available at 2002 WL 2884390 (last visited Mar. 20, 2003).

favours [sic] the introduction of Islamic syariah law, as “fostering hatred in their kindergartens and schools.”⁹

The same is occurring in China with Beijing justifying its targeting of the western Xinjiang province as part of its anti-terrorism campaign.¹⁰ When UNHCHR Commissioner Mary Robinson openly criticized China about its mistreatment of people in Xinjiang and Tibet, she was rebuffed by Chinese officials including President Jiang Zemin. China’s moves to stop Xinjiang and Tibet from breaking away were explained as being part of the global anti-terror battle.¹¹ The language of terrorism was used by China to label NGO groups negatively. Chinese officials during the meeting of the World Summit on Information Society in Tokyo in January 2003, and in an attempt to block Taiwanese NGOs from participating at the meeting, Chinese officials asked that only United Nations accredited NGOs be allowed participation as they claimed terrorist organizations disguised as NGOs could participate in such meetings.

Anti-terrorist measures did make an impact human rights in the region. Due to the lack of agreement and the absence of effective human rights mechanisms in the region, it is likely that human rights abuses in the region will flourish. Post-September 11th national security laws in the region have been stricter; as a result there has been, since September 11th, rights abuses such as discrimination, detention without trial, increased surveillance, and invasion of privacy. In addition, with the recasting of some existing pre-September 11th issues as terrorist issues, separatist movements, internally displaced people, and illegal immigrant labor all are now more vulnerable.

VII. CONCLUSION

September 11th certainly made it vividly clear that, as a region, Southeast Asia is politically insignificant vis-à-vis the major powers in the world. None of the countries from the region have a seat in the United Nations Security Council. While India’s (or even Japan’s) claim for a seat is acknowledged, it still does not have a seat. Although China has a seat, traditionally, it abstains when it comes to voting for a war against another country, in this case Iraq. If Southeast Asian governments seem insignificant in the world’s political stage, its people remain even more insignificant. It is clear that the people’s voices in the region are loud. Whether it is in terms of arguments on how to deal with the so-called terrorist problem or how to

9. Susan Loone, *Umno or PAS: Which Islamic state is more threatening?*, at <http://www.Malaysiakini.com> (last visited June 6, 2002).

10. See Charles Hutzler, *Beijing Outlines Terrorist Links*, ASIAN WALL ST. J., Jan. 22, 2002, available at 2002 WL-WSJA 3342882.

11. *No Afghanistan: Beijing is using the U.S. led war on terrorism to justify a new crackdown on separatists in the northwest; It’s a strategy that might backfire*, FAR E. ECON. REV., Nov. 29, 2001, available at 2001 WL-FEER 24083127.

proceed with the war in Iraq. But vis-à-vis their own individual governments, they remain weak. They are unable to persuade their governments to act in a way that is against the thrust of the United States intentions. September 11th – in more ways than one – has shown the political weakness of the region in relation to the dominant powers on the world stage.

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