

cultural practices were to be discarded. He used religion, Islam and the control of the media to retain his popularity and power. Thus his administration proved not only more authoritarian than that of his predecessors but also more imaginative in its populist appeal. Mahathir's period is characterized according to the author, by a repetition of popular show of dissatisfaction and the states' repressive mechanisms. Yet Mahathir held regular elections and won regularly with 2/3 majority in the parliament. Thus, there exists contradictory phenomenon of an authoritarian state endorsed by popular mandate. The author calls this the "dual system"---and the book is a condemnation of this system.

This piece of work has been drawn from the author's doctoral thesis to Manchester University in 1993. The premise of the theme seems to be largely influenced by the author's revulsion to the institutions of governance in Malaysia which in one degree or the other remain nightmare to her. She has had her husband detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA) in 1987. Her sympathy with the ethnic Chinese community in the country is apparently a consequence of her distaste with her perceived inimical treatment meted out to the Chinese community by the system dominated by the Malays. However, she does not mention the discrimination faced by Malays, under the British, which had deprived them of all economic and educational privileges. Had the author not been properly supervised, this work might have ended as no more than a polemic penned by a frustrated person.

The USA and the Pacific

The New Pacific Community: US Strategic Option in Asia by Martin L. Lasater. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1996, pp.177 ISBN 0-8133-88694.

Reviewer: Wahabuddin Raees, Lecturer Matriculation Center, International Islamic University, Malaysia.

The American post-Cold War foreign policy objectives in the Asia-Pacific region are identical to its national interests during the Cold War. However, the "exercise of effective leadership" into the Pacific Rim is a new dimension of the American Post-Cold War foreign policy objectives in the region. Moreover, while the substance of American interests in the Pacific Rim remains unperturbed, what has been

modified are Washington's post-Cold War foreign policy strategies. The new look at American foreign policy strategy emphasizes the principle of cost-efficiency, which means that the American policy makers should apply means and instruments that could help achieve US national security interests at a minimum cost. Martin L. Lasater in *The New Pacific Community* advances the above view.

Initially, Martin defines the parameters of the American post-World War II or Cold War policy. According to him, containment was the policy pursued by all American administrations during the Cold War era to get access to resources and markets in the region, largely through bilateral strategic alliance formation. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the perception of policy makers in the United States about the international system that existed since World War II changed. This resulted in a shift in US foreign policy strategy, but not in its national interests. Nevertheless, Martin contradicts himself when he says that in the post-Cold War international order the United States also wants to be viewed as an indisputable role-formulator and would like to see the emergence of a "Pacific Community" that brings the Americas and the Asia Pacific together. Again, Martin subscribes to the idea that Americans view the post-Cold War international system as economically tripolar, decisions and policies pursued by statesmen in Bush-Clinton administrations discussed in Martin's thesis imply that the elites in the United States perceived the emerging international order as unipolar with the United States as the sole super power.

Bush administration designed "Beyond Containment" policy to respond to the uncertain security environment in the region. The concept "New World Order" was coined to define Bush's policy of "Beyond Containment." Toward that end strategies of "Collective Engagement" and "Regional Contingency" were designed. Martin therefore, discusses a shift in the American interests in the Asia Pacific during the post-cold War era, which contradicts his earlier assertion that the American interests during the pre and post-Cold War periods have remained identical.

Clinton introduced the policy of "Enlargement and Engagement" to substitute Bush's "New World Order". Clinton also introduced the strategy of "Assertive Multilateralism" in place of Bush's strategies of "Collective Engagement" and "Regional Contingency." However, to Martin, the differences between Bush and Clinton's policies are conceptual and not substantial. According to him, Clinton policies are continuation of the policies pursued by Bush's administration and

would result in the creation of the desired "Pacific Community."

The idea of a Pacific community represents shared interests, shared goals, shared commitments to mutual beneficial cooperation among the nations on the two sides of the Pacific Rim. A further ramification of the Pacific community is the enlargement or expansion of the free market economy to the non-market economies in the Pacific. The creation of the Pacific community is essential if the United States wants to preserve its domination in world politics. Creation of the Pacific community geopolitically requires credible presence of the American forces. Geo-economically, institutionalization of the Asia Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) on US terms is an American foreign policy priority in the region. Economic regime or institutions that excludes US membership is not a welcome idea in Washington. Therefore, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad's attempts at establishing Southeast Asian Economic Caucus, without American membership, have been severely criticized by Washington.

Martin believes that the Russian Federation, China, Japan, and ironically India, could pose serious threats to the American security interests in the region. However, Martin presents mixed views with regard to centrality of the threat. Finally, Martin examines a host of strategies and solutions advocated by official research institutions as well as non-governmental independent bodies. All of these strategies emphasize American engagement in the Pacific Rim. Almost all the strategies are somewhat based on the assumption that in the face of uncertain regional security the American disengagement from the regional affairs could be detrimental to the interests of the United States.

Martin's work is a welcome contribution to the field of international affairs in general, and to the American foreign policy in particular. It is based on very important official documents. This work is an example of international politics in practice and not in theory. One could observe elements of both idealist and realist schools of thought in the American foreign policies as well as in the strategies implemented or suggested. Nonetheless, realism appears dominant throughout the discussion as all policy recommendations, official or otherwise, suggest that the United States must do everything to remain engaged in the Pacific affairs to protect its interests in the region.

However, Martin fails to analyze the problem the American policy-makers face when they want to exercise effective leadership and yet pursue the policy of assertive multilateralism. The latter presupposes

cost-sharing, mutual-consultation, and a consensus decision-making. The former implies going alone and imposing US will upon others. Shared decisions pose a challenge to the principle of the "exercise of the effective leadership" by the United States in the region.

On a final note, the study is insensitive to the socio-cultural conditions of the nations in the Pacific region. Martin takes for granted that the regional powers should do things the American way and all sorts of arrangements in the region should take shape on terms formulated in Washington. Therefore, the American values, as implied, are universal. Such an assumption is sure to breed resentment against American involvement in the region as a whole. American policy makers will be well advised to be sensitive to the interest and values of the regional actors should they wish to remain engaged and promote stability in the region. Martin's suggestion for "the balance of power system" to promote systematic stability is well worth serious consideration on the part of United State policy makers.

Thoughts on Islamic Civilisation

Islamic Civilisation: Real Perspective by Maulana Sadruddin Islahi. translated by Israr Ahmad Khan. 1997. Kuala Lumpur: Golden Books Centre. Pp. 145. ISBN: 983-72-0309-9.

Reviewer: Rajashree Suppiah, Department of Political Science, IIUM.

Though humans are blessed with an intellect and the faculty of reasoning, the author of *Islamic Civilisation: Real Perspective* despairs that mankind appears to be sliding down the slope of ignorance and indifference. The search for the reasons of how and why this sad state of affairs came about and the "struggle between Islam and *Jahliyyah* (ignorance)" which was the subject matter of a paper by the author crystallised into the book being reviewed here.

The recent years have been a witness to an immense task being undertaken by Muslim scholars dedicated to the cause of Islam. The endeavour known as Islamization of Knowledge calls for the building up and adding to the corpus of existing knowledge, that which is in consonance with Islam and Islamic principles. The book in its original form was written some three decades ago in Urdu, with the above objective in mind. The translator Israr Ahmad Khan has give a new lease of life to the book by rendering it in a language that is capable of reaching a wider spectrum of audiences.

Islamic Civilisation first appeared as *Ma'rakah Islam-o-Jāhiliyyah* (The Struggle Between Islam and Ignorance) wherein the author in his early scholarly days was much engrossed in the notion of Islam and its main natural rival, i.e. ignorance. *Jāhiliyyah* is the recurrent theme and the common thread running through the chapters of the book as the author identifies this notion as the reason and ultimate culprit leading to all weaknesses and shortcomings within the Ummah and the world at large. Complacency by other who ought to know better and guard against this ignorance has resulted in "a blasphemy, encompassing almost all walks of life and gradually leading the Ummah to intellectual stagnation, religious frustration, consolidation of groupism..."(p. 111) and other such dire circumstances.

The chapter entitled "Islam: Strange Beginning" which is followed by another similar sounding chapter called "Strange Beginnings of Islam" paints the picture of the development of the Islamic civilisation. The author quite effectively employs a story telling approach to set out the historical events that shape the course of Islam and Islamic civilisation.

Nonetheless by referring to how things had been done during the inception of Islam and how things ought to be, the author lays down the foundations which the readers may resort to in the study of political events leading to the state of *jāhiliyyah* and disintegration of the Ummah. The latter event ultimately resulted in there being different political units and states. The writer points out that "every Muslim country...is a separate sovereign nation and an independent political unit" (p.99). Chapters 3 and 6 would be the most pertinent ones for those interested in the political development of the Muslim community. The political system of Islam i.e. the Caliphate system, the role of the *khalifah* or the ruler and his duties are examined here and the author concludes by referring to countries such as Indonesia, Turkey, Pakistan among others, that the Caliphate system is not even given lip service in nations professing to be Muslim nations.

Towards the end and in the concluding chapter of the book the author demonstrates the cyclical nature of events whereby after attaining its peak during the time of the Prophet and years that followed, Islamic civilisation disintegrated to the point that estrangement by Muslims and Muslim nations from Islamic values, principles and laws is manifest in their adherence and adoration of western models of civilisation. The author does not deny the state of intellectual advancement of the world today yet laments that as far as

the knowledge of *tawhīd*, *ākhirah* and *risālah* were concerned, the world is at no better position than the *jāhiliyyah* of the 7th century. (p.118).

Islamic Civilisation: Real Perspective provides a clear perspective of the civilisation from its historical roots which is both brief and succinct. By touching on some of the concepts for state, leadership and politics based on the Islamic *khilāfah* system the author sets the grounds for which further ideas could and are in fact being studied. Finally, it is submitted that the author's espousing of Islam as the true religion and denouncing all else as total ignorance in the introductory chapter does not do justice to the rest of the book and the author only risks alienating non-Muslim readers with such statements. An adoption of the approach by current Muslim scholars of social science with an awareness of their Western influenced readership would carry the message across further by presenting a viable alternative and an acceptable perspective.

As for the aspect of translation, not having had the privilege of reading the book in its original form, the only observation that the reviewer could make is that the use of somewhat long sentences and advanced vocabulary affects adversely the readability and understanding of this work. Nevertheless, the essence of the author's work seems to have been quite effectively conveyed to the reader.