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From Empire to the War on Terror: The 1915 Indian Sepoy Mutiny in Singapore as a case study of the impact of profiling of religious and ethnic minorities.

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at some of the unintended consequences of religious and ethnic profiling of minorities that took place during the colonial era, and which in 1915 lead to a mutiny by Indian Sepoys then stationed in Singapore. The 1915 mutiny later complicated inter-ethnic relations in the colony, and may have been one of the factors that contributed to the mobilization of Indian Muslims against British rule in Asia later. Today, the dynamics of the global "War on Terror" bears uncanny resemblances to the Indian Sepoy Mutiny in Singapore in 1915. Both reflect the dynamics of oppositional dialectics and the impact of racial-religious profiling on the identity of Muslims across the globe. They incur the politics of "othering" Muslims, which require them to choose between loyalty to their nation/state/empire and their ethno-religious community. A side effect is the sharpening of boundaries between the Western and Muslim worlds.

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include: *Writings on the War on Terror* (Globalmedia Press, India, 2006), *From Majapahit to Putrajaya: Searching For Another Malaysia* (Silverfish Books, Kuala Lumpur, 2005), *Islam Progresif: Peluang, Tentangan dan Masa Depannya di Asia Tenggara* (SAMHA, Jogjakarta, 2005), *Di San Zhi Yan Kan Ma Lai Xi Ya* (Sin Chew Jit Poh Press, Petaling Jaya, 2004), *The Other Malaysia: Writings on Malaysia's Subaltern History (*Silverfish Books, Kuala Lumpur, 2003); and *New Voices of Islam*, (International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World, Leiden, Netherlands, 2002).

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From Empire to the War on Terror: The 1915 Indian Sepoy Mutiny in Singapore as a case study of the impact of profiling of religious and ethnic minorities.

I. Introduction: How *not* to lose friends and make new enemies

Any talk of a War on Terror necessarily leads us to some form of oppositional dialectics or another; and one that is couched in terms that are bellicose to boot. However, oppositional dialectics—and dialectics in general—has to be understood for what it is: a bipolar relationship, framed in terms of violent hierarchies, where a process of othering the *Other* is necessary for that oppositional dialectics to get off the ground in the first place. This poses a number of conceptual and theoretical problems that serve as the starting point for the enquiry we will attempt in this paper.

Firstly, it ought to be noted that such violent dialectics necessarily involves the framing of the Other in negative terms, which in turn sets the tone of the violent opposition/contestation between the same and the other. This, however, means that the negative Other also serves as a *constitutive Other* without which the Self/same cannot be framed. Dialectics of any kind necessitates this mutually-dependent form of bipolarity for the dialectics to work, and as such the Other, even when configured in negative oppositional terms, is the condition of possibility for the Self/same to be identified for what it is.

Secondly, the fact that the constitutive Other, even though framed in negative terms, is the constitutive Other means that it is bound up in the discursive economy of the same as well. The Other, in any oppositional dialectical relationship, is never and can never be radically outside the economy of the same, for the simple reason that it would otherwise not be able to play that role as the constitutive Other against which the Self/same is framed. We therefore need to remind ourselves that in all oppositional dialectical relations, the Other is often an inversed mirror reflection of the Self/same.

Thirdly, the nature of such violent dialectical relations entails that the framing of such dialectical relationships also often requires the framing of two separate but

oppositional chains of equivalences, whereby that, which is deemed positive, is discursively associated with a range of other positive attributes, ideas and values. Conversely, that, which is opposed, is likewise discursively linked to a host of other negative values, ideas, tropes and symbols as well. Violent oppositional dialectics often leads us to the contestation of two different chains of equivalences.

Taking into account the factors above, a close look at the discourse on the War on Terror has operated more or less along the now-familiar routes of many other oppositional dialectical relationships: Notwithstanding the fact that the signifier "terror" has rarely been ostensibly defined with clear-cut empirical referents, the discourse itself has now gained currency in international political, security and academic circles. Yet the vagueness of the concept of terror does not and has not deterred it from gaining instrumental value among policymakers the world over. If we were to adopt the position taken by Edward Said in some of his writings, we can tentatively agree with the view that the vagueness of the concept of the War on Terror is not a hindrance to its utility as it still does serve the role of an *instrumental fiction* that can animate politics and be used as a justification and rationale for modes of policymaking and political behaviour. Ironically, one does not have to clearly define what terror is in order to declare war on it—despite the semantic clumsiness of the phrase.

What can be said and written about with some degree of certainly are the spill-over effects of the War on Terror on American-Muslim world relations, and how the image of both the Western and Muslim worlds were rapidly re-configured in the wake of the declaration of the War on Terror by the Bush administration in Washington. Elsewhere we have written about how the War on Terror had the adverse effect of rendering negative the image of the United States of America and the West in the eyes of Muslim communities in Asia (Noor, 2008, 2007, 2006, 2005[1]). The same discourse

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[1] Re: Farish A. Noor, *Writings on the "War on Terror"*, Global Media Publications, New Delhi, 2006; Farish A. Noor, Comment la "Guerre contre le Terrorisme" de Washington est devenue celle de tous: L'islamophobie et l'impact du 11 Septembre sur le terrain politique l'Asie du Sud et du Sud-est, in Ramon Grosfoguel, Mohamad Mestiri and El Yamine Soum, Islamophobie dans le Monde Moderne. IIIT France and Berkeley University of California, Paris, 2008. (pp. 275–319); Farish A. Noor, How "Big Brother" America Became the "Great Satan": Changing Perceptions of the United States among the Muslim Communities of Southeast Asia, in Ivan Krastev and Alan McPherson (Eds.), *The Anti-American Century*, Central European University (CEU) Press, Budapest and New York, 2007. (pp. 109–127); Farish A. Noor, "Uncle Sam to the Rescue? The Political Impact of American Involvement

that was taken up with some degree of enthusiasm by right-wing politicians in Western Europe also accounted for the resurgence of the far-right in countries like France, Denmark and Holland, and the deterioration of relations with Muslims resident there.[2] We have also looked at how the re-positioning of Muslim subjectivities and identities as a result of the oppositional dialectics between the West and Islam had contributed to some of the more awkward and bizarre configurations and re-configurations of floating signifiers (such as the signifier of Osama bin Laden himself) in a host of new contexts, ranging from dissident youth movements in China to anti-state forces in Southeast Asia (Noor, 2004[3]).

Seen from the analytical perspective of discourse analysis, the War on Terror has had a significant impact in the reconfiguration of political/cultural identities and the forging of new political alliances between the Western world and the Muslim world. President Bush's simple gesture of drawing the dividing line between those "who are with us or against us" meant that henceforth the landscape of international politics would be divided between the "coalition of the willing" and the so-called "Axis of Evil", with no neutral space in between for fence-sitters. As we have argued elsewhere (Noor, 2007, 2006), this placed the governments of many Muslim-majority

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in ASEAN Security and Political Issues in the Wake of 9-11", in Denis Lacorne and Tony Judt (Eds.), *With Us or Against Us: Studies in Global Anti-Americanism*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2005.

[2] By mid-2002, the countries of Western Europe had all experienced a major swing to the conservative right. In a series of general elections, the conservatives swept to power in France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Portugal and Italy. The rise of the far right in Europe coincided with the resurgence of the right in the United States, and the ideological discourses employed by them were very similar. In the wake of the attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001, the extreme right was in an even better position to take advantage of the fears and insecurities of the electorate. This led to the shocking and unpredicted win of the mercurial Front National candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen in the first round of the French Presidential election in early 2002. Though he lost in the second round, Le Pen and the Front National won nearly six million votes. In the Legislative Assembly election that followed, the conservative party of Jacques Chirac did much better than expected, and ended the five-year period of rule by the socialists led by Lionel Jospin. In the Netherlands, a major electoral upset was caused by the sudden rise of extreme-right candidate Pim Fortuyn, who burst on the local political scene with his uncompromising anti-immigration and anti-Muslim rhetoric, claiming Muslims were a threat to Europe and European identity. Calling on Muslims in the Netherlands to respect and abide by Dutch customs and the Christian identity of Europe, Fortuyn wrote and published a book entitled *Against the Islamisation of the Netherlands*. Though attacked by many leftists and liberals, Fortuyn gained wide support, particularly in the Rotterdam region. Less than nine days before the election, he was assassinated by a militant environmentalist who objected to his statements about animal rights. Fortuyn's party received a massive sympathy vote from the electorate, winning 36 per cent of the votes and 26 seats in Parliament. The party didn't even exist 80 days before the election.

[3] Farish A. Noor, "When Osama and Friends Came a-calling: The Political Deployment of the Overdetermined Image of Osama ben Laden in the Contestation for Islamic Symbols in Malaysia", in Peter van der Veer and Shoma Munshi (Eds.), *Media, War and Terrorism: Responses from the Middle East and Asia*. Routledge Curzon, Politics in Asia series, London, 2004. (pp. 197–223).

countries in a difficult and uncomfortable position, having to choose between either placating the geo-strategic demands of Washington or bowing to pressure from their own Muslim electorates and constituencies.

What the War on Terror—as a discourse—did was to effectively narrow down the scope of logical possibilities for many non-Western countries and governments, and rendered any form of constructive dialogue with Islamist actors and agents beyond the horizon of possibility. It also set up two neat chains of equivalences: One which discursively equated the West with freedom, democracy and the "forces of good"; and the other that discursively equated Islam and the Muslim world with a host of real and imagined evils, ranging from terrorism to orchestrated violence against all proponents of democracy and freedom. It is interesting to note that as the latter chain of equivalences was expanded, it also managed to net other states that were deemed to be equally hostile to the values that were valorized by the Bush administration, including ostensibly secular and certainly not Muslim states like North Korea and Cuba: all of whom were lumped together as part of the international Axis of Evil.

The aim of this paper is not to look into the semantic and symbolic construction of identities or even to problematize the workings of such politically and ideologically-loaded vocabularies. Rather, we would like to look at one of the side-effects of such a process of drawing together a chain of equivalences, in terms of its impact on ordinary Muslims who were roped into taking sides in the War on Terror and who—as a result of a range of new security measures such as racial and religious profiling—unwittingly and unwillingly brought within its security ambit.

II. Racial/Religious Profiling as the Other*ing* of Muslims: Its impact on West-Islam relations

We should emphasize at this point that violence in the name of religion in general and Islam, in particular, is neither new nor a surprise to anyone. Furthermore, intra-Muslim violence and violence between Muslims and others has been a historical fact long before the events of 11 September 2001. In this respect at least, it is important for us to understand how and why the attacks on the United States on 11 September were subsequently rendered unique and singular.

Fear and anxiety in the United States about Islam and Muslims is not a novel phenomenon: It made itself manifest in the nation-wide panic over Islam and Muslims in the wake of the Oklahoma bombing in the mid-1990s, even though it was subsequently proven that the bombing of the FBI building in Oklahoma city was not the work of Muslims but rather home-grown white supremacist ethno-nationalists like Timothy McVeigh. Nonetheless, the fact that in the space of 24 hours, allegations were cast against Muslims in the United States demonstrated the fact that anti-Muslim (or particularly anti-Arab) sentiment was rife in some quarters of the United States.

In the wake of 11 September 2001, however, a more complex discourse was assembled by Western security analysts to explain the event and to serve as a rationale and justification for the policy measures that were to follow. We have seen how scores of academics, analysts, policymakers and think-tanks have been working hard to locate the ideological cause and underpinnings of the attacks *in Islam itself*: monographs and books, theses and dissertations have been written trying to trace the source of Muslim anger not in the political economy of international relations or the uneven economic and power differentials between the West and the developing world, but rather in textual and historical sources and contexts instead. Over the past decade, a range of experts on "Islamic terrorism" have tried to locate the cause of terror in the writings of Muslim scholars like Ibn Taymiyya,[4] the political and

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[4] The Hanbalite scholar Taqial-din ibn Taymiyya lived between the years 1263 and 1328. Living as he did at a time when the Muslim lands were under threat from Mongol and Christian invaders, ibn Taymiyya's views on law, politics, society and relations with other non-Muslim communities reflected a deep sense of fear and insecurity. Fazlur Rahman (1979) has noted that "Ibn Taymiyya's programme fundamentally consists of a restatement of the *Shariah* and a vindication of religious values. (For him) the *Shariah* was a comprehensive concept and it included the spiritual truth of the Sufis (*haqiqa'*) and the rational truth (*aql*) of the philosopher and the theologian, and the law." (p. 111) His aim was to reunify all these practices and disciplines under the higher register of the *Shariah*. Throughout his career, he engaged in numerous dialogues and disputations with both the Sufis and rationalist philosophers, as well as traditionalist *Ulama*. Ibn Taymiyya also criticized the practice of *Taqlid*—adherence to any one of the four major schools of Sunni Islamic legal thought—on the grounds that such divisions had no place in Islam and that they also led to confusion and divisions among the Muslim community. In all these cases, ibn Taymiyya's underlying concern was the need to unite and protect Muslims from both internal and external threats and divisions. Much of his writings concentrated on the need for Muslims to defend themselves and their faith at whatever cost. He advocated the separation of Muslims from non-Muslims, and called on Muslims to withdraw from contact with others lest they be contaminated by their influence. This exclusive and defensive attitude led to a culture of paranoia and over-protectiveness among his followers and adherents, and ibn Taymiyya's constant calls for the "purification" of Islam and Muslim practices contributed to the practice of *takfir* (accusing other Muslims of being *kafirs*) among his followers. Fazlur Rahman (1979) notes that ibn Taymiyya did not have a large following during his own lifetime and his influence did not lead to the creation of a specific movement. But in the centuries that followed, other Islamist groups from the Hanbalite tradition would take up his ideas and put them to work, the most notable

ideological role of Wahabism, primordial attachments to the collective memory of the Crusades, and so on.

Yet, despite whatever angle was adopted, the root causes of Muslim anger was somehow located in Islam and Muslim religious and cultural norms and history, thus pathologizing it as a Muslim problem. Because the vocabulary of the discourse of the War on Terror framed the terms of the conflict thus, the neat bifurcation of the two dyadic categories of Islam and the West made it next to impossible for ordinary Muslims to stand outside the economy of differentiation and difference and to claim a sense of Muslim identity that was not somehow or another drawn into this dialectical conflict. If, as the unstated assumption went, the cause of Muslim anger and violence were to be found in the teachings, history and norms of Islam and Muslim life itself, it followed logically that every Muslim was a potential terrorist who could potentially hate the West and do violence to it and its values.

The net results of this rather simple form of opposition dialectics were manifold:

- Apart from giving support to those who had already held long-term anxiety and fear of Islam and umbrage to believing and practicing Muslims, it also meant that those Muslims who wished to retain their sense of Muslim identity and not be drawn into the violent oppositional dialectics of Islam versus the West had to constantly demonstrate their commitment to the values of democracy, liberty, freedom, etc. that had been claimed by others.

- This in turn opened up a range of opportunity structures for Muslims to choose whether they would conform to the role of "good Muslims" or "bad Muslims", but on terms that were set by others and not of their own choosing. As we have seen in many of the highly contested debates and controversies that have arisen in the West of late, almost all the symbols and signifiers of Muslim

being the *Wahabbis* of the Arabian Peninsula (p. 114). Many other conservative and radical Islamist movements like the *Ahl-i Hadith, Ikhwan'ul Muslimun* and *Jama'at-e Islami* also trace this intellectual lineage back to him. [See: Fazlur Rahman, *Islam.* University of Chicago Press, Chicago. 1979 (2nd edition), Saodah Abdul Rahman, *The Concept of Takfir (Accusing of Disbelief) Among Some Contemporary Islamic Movements with Special Reference to Egypt.* Ph.d thesis, Department of Theology, University of Birmingham, Birmingham. May 1994.]

identity—from headscarves to the minarets of mosques—have now become politically and ideologically loaded symbols contested by both liberal and secular Westerners and Muslims, as well as conservative Muslims who wish to maintain some control over the symbols of their identity.

- And despite the attempts to demonstrate their commitment to the values of liberal-democracy and freedom, even those who were wont to be lumped into the category of "good Muslims" were kept in a probationary state where their identities and subject-positions would be and could be redefined and reconfigured at any time, by others who held them up against a benchmark of social acceptance not of their own design.

The racial/religious profiling of Muslims and their newfound status as probationary citizens in the world community that suspected their intentions meant that Muslim identity remained contested and problematic. The only ones who seemed to benefit from the situation were those who wished to perpetuate the instrumental fiction of Muslims being a potential source of violence and perpetually on the margins of social/political acceptability; and Islamist conservatives whose own oppositional dialectics against the West and all things Western equally necessitated the creation of such a violent and contested frontier between "Us" and "Them".

Yet after almost a decade and despite the international effort to win the so-called War on Terror, little progress has been made in terms of improving relations and deepening the understanding between communities. We would argue that what we have witnessed thus far is a repetition of the old: namely a case where the racial/religious profiling of a particular community has done little to bring us any closer towards a politics of inclusion, but rather has moved us to a politics of exclusion which can only aggravate the situation further and open up other opportunity structures for resistance, opposition and violence. The example we wish to cite is closer to home, and refers to the Sepoy Munity in Singapore in the year 1915.

III. From *loyal subject* to *mistrusted Other*: The repositioning of Indian Muslims in Singapore after the 1915 Sepoy Mutiny and its impact on colonial race-relations

"Racial and/or religious profiling" has become a buzzword of late, and has become a contentious issue for many public intellectuals, policymakers, security experts and human rights activists. However, it ought to be noted that racial and/or religious profiling is not exactly a new phenomenon either, and that it has in fact been practiced in many earlier historical contexts. One such context was the context of colonial race-relations as it was practiced during the height of Western colonial power in Asia, Africa and other parts of the world between the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and as we hope to show in our example cited below, racial and/or religious profiling owes its history and genealogy to this period where race-relations were framed against a hierarchical relation of power-differentials that was part and parcel of the colonial enterprise in the first place.

Here it has to be noted that racial/ethnic profiling is hardly a new phenomenon, and that its genealogy can be traced back to the pseudo-scientific theories of racial difference that were the bedrock of colonial race-relations and racialized capitalism during the colonial era itself. We have argued elsewhere (Noor, 2009) that the concept of race and racial difference was introduced to the colonial setting of Singapore, Malaya and the rest of Southeast Asia as part and parcel of the colonizing apparatus, which was created in order to facilitate and expedite the exploitation of natural resources in the colonies through the help (labour) of racially differentiated colonial subjects. Thus it has to be remembered that as far back as the mid-nineteenth century, theories of generic racial/ethnic traits and essentialized typologies were already in currency in the discourse of governance in many of the colonies of Asia.[5]

The British Empire, which shall be our focus here, was a cosmopolitan and global empire that brought together communities of all kinds—differentiated along ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious lines—into a singular global network of power and

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[5] Re: Farish A. Noor, "The Lost Tribes of Malaysia: The Construction of "Race" and Racial Difference during the colonial era", in Farish A Noor, Farish A. Noor: *What Your Teacher Did Not Tell You: The Annexe Lectures, Volume I.* Matahari Books, Kuala Lumpur, 2009.

economic relations. Yet the cosmopolitanism of this imperial network was one that was also regulated according to an order of knowledge and power that situated some ethnicities/races above others, and which kept all colonized subjects on the lower rungs of the social ladder. The challenge of the imperial system was to secure and maintain the loyalty of the colonized subjects on the basis of contractual obligations and loyalties to an imperial mother-state, while relegating other loyalties and attachments (including primordial loyalties to ethnicity, homeland and religion) secondary. This posed problems (both existential and political) for those Asian and African colonial subjects who felt themselves torn between loyalty to the empire and their respective ethnic and religious identities. By the turn of the nineteenth century, colonial subjects across Asia were asking themselves the question: Can one be a loyal colonial subject and a Muslim/Hindu/Buddhist Indian/Malay/Burmese at the same time?

With the onset of the First World War, the standing of Indian Muslims in British India and the other Asian colonies of Britain (as well as the significant presence of Indian Muslims in Britain, the United States of America and Western Europe) would once again be put to question. By then, the British colonial authorities in British India, Burma, Malaya and Singapore were deeply concerned about the rise of new Indian nationalist movements in India and abroad, and to compound their fears even further, the discovery of the Pan-Indian Ghadar conspiracy[6] and the so-called "Hindu-German

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[6] The "Ghadar conspiracy" that was hatched in the United States of America was linked to the "Indian-German Conspiracy" of the same period, and both plans were linked to the nascent anti-colonial movement that began to emerge in India by the end of the nineteenth century. The rapid development of the colony meant that India was by then one of the biggest colonial markets in the Empire and a major source of natural resources as well. Britain's fortunes in colonial India hung in the balance with the onset of the First World War. India was then the colony that provided most of the manpower in the war effort against Germany and her allies; and India alone sent out 1.3 million soldiers to help Britain in the Western front. However, by then, sentiments had begun to change in India as more and more Indian nationalist leaders and movements like the Indian Nationalist Congress (est. 1885) and Muslim League (est. 1906) were demanding the right for self-determination. Prior to the outbreak of the First World War, those in the Indian diaspora were already working hard to mobilize Indians abroad in the name of Indian self-determination and independence. Thanks to the missionary efforts of Hindu scholars like Vivekananda, the ideals and philosophy of Hinduism had found a receptive audience in the West. In 1908, the Irish lawyer-philanthropist Myron Phelps helped to found the India House of New York, in Manhattan. Prior to that, the Indian leader Shyamji Krishna Varma who had founded the India House in London had established contact with Irish republicans in London who were likewise sympathetic to the cause of the Indian nationalists, and over the years the relationship between Indian nationalists and Irish republicans on both sides of the Atlantic grew stronger and stronger. Following the creation of the India House in New York, Indian student activists began to circulate their own publications such as *The Indian Sociologist* and *Free Hindustan* that delved into the history of India and the historical destiny of the Indian people. Much of these activities received the support of Irish

plot"[7] only reinforced the paranoia of British colonial administrators that something had to be done fast to prevent India from falling into the hands of Indian nationalists

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republicans based in the United States, as well as American liberals and socialists who were opposed to imperialism and the British imperial presence in India in particular. In 1908, Indian leaders such as P. S. Khankhoje, Tarak Nakh Das and Kanshi Ram founded the Indian Independence League (IIL) in Portland, Oregon. These initial attempts to mobilize Indians in America against British colonial rule led to the formation of the Pacific Coast Hindoostan Association in 1913, which was led by Har Dayal and Sohan Singh Bhaka. Many of its initial members were Indian students like Tarak Nakh Das and Vishnu Ganesh Pingle, who were studying in the United States in universities such as Berkeley University in California. With the outbreak of the First World War, the Pacific Coast Hindoostan Association evolved to become the Ghadar party and its immediate goal was to entice Indian soldiers in the British colonial army to revolt against the British commanding officers. The Ghadar party founded its own newsletters and journals such as the *Hindustan Ghadar*, where the members of the movement called for open revolt against the British imperial government. Despite the attempts to suppress the movement in the United States (by the American government, at the request of their British counterparts), Ghadarite leaders were able to travel across America, Canada, Europe and Asia to spread their ideas: Between 1913 and 1914, one of the leaders of the Ghadar party, Mathra Singh, managed to travel from the United States to China (Shanghai) and then to India and Hong Kong to preach the ideas of the movement and to call on Indian colonial soldiers to rebel against the British. In 1914, the Ghadar movement put its plans into action and began to despatch Ghadar party activists back to India with the help of Irish republicans as well as the Germans (who were engaged against the British in the European theatre of war). Among the key Ghadarite leaders then involved in the operation were the Berkeley-educated Vishnu Ganesh Pingle, Rash Behari Bose, Kartar Singh and Sachin Sanyal. The members reached India through a myriad of routes that went across China, Central Asia as well as Thailand. By February 1915, the outline of the plan was set: The aim of the Ghadarites was to set off a series of bomb attacks across Bengal and Punjab with the hope that it would create a situation of conflict and anarchy that would allow the Indian colonial army units to break free and turn against their commanders. The Ghadari plot, however, was discovered by Kirpal Singh, a British-Indian soldier who was serving the CID (Criminal Investigations Department) of the British security services in Punjab. As a result, the planned attacks were brought forward but to no avail. British CID managed to stop most of the attacks in India, and the planned revolt of the 130th Baluchi Regiment in Rangoon was likewise thwarted. Among the few attacks that did succeed was the Indian Muslim revolt in Singapore. Following the discovery of the Ghadar conspiracy, the movement's leaders were rounded up and put on trial under the Defence of India Act of 1915. V. G. Pingle was among those caught and arrested while carrying explosive devices. Under the Defence of India Act, extraordinary measures were introduced to further enhance and protect British rule in India; which in turn further soured relations between the British colonial government and the Indian nationalists even further. [Re: Giles Brown, *The Hindu Conspiracy 1914–1917*, University of California Press, 1948; B. R. Deepak, *Revolutionary Activities of the Ghadar Party in China*, Sage Publications,1999; Peter Hopkirk, *On Secret Service East of Constantinople,* Oxford University Press, 2001; Tilak R. Sareen, *Secret Documents of the Singapore Mutiny of 1915,* Mounto Publishing House, New Delhi, 1995.]

[7] The "Hindu-German conspiracy" was the result of two unrelated developments at the turn of the twentieth century: The emergence of Indian nationalism in India and the rise of Germany as a power with military ambitions in Europe. By then, London, Oxford and Cambridge were the centres of Indian nationalist thought and many young Indian activists were working among themselves as well as other anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements that were operating openly in the imperial metropole. Among the first Indian leaders who arrived in London to organize the nationalist movement there was Shyamji Krishna Varma, who later helped to found the India House of London. Krishna Varma then also created the Indian Home Rule Society, which called on Indians in Britain to take an active part in the development of Indian nationalism. Among Varma's close contacts in London was Mohammad Barkatullah, who later created the India House of New York, based in Manhattan in 1906. While Indians in America had created the Pacific Coast Hindustan Association—that was under the leadership of Indian nationalists like Har Dayal and Sohan Singh Bhakna—the Indians of Britain and the rest of Western Europe were likewise engaged in organizing themselves. India House in London became the focal point of anti-British and anti-colonial activities, and hosted the visit of radical Indian leaders like V. D. Sarvarkar (who would later become the leader of the *Rashtriya Swayansevak Sangh*),

working hand-in-glove with the enemies of the British Empire, be it Germany or some pan-Islamic Muslim brotherhood.[8]

Due to the manner in which imperial expansion created networks of communication that brought disparate localities into closer proximity, events that were taking place

until the assassination of Sir Curzon Wyllie (then aide to the Secretary of State for India). Following the death of Sir Curzon Wyllie, the activities of India House came under the control of the London Metropolitan Police and the Special Branch. Due to increased political pressure on them, many of the Indian nationalist activists chose to work underground or to move to other Western European countries that were more sympathetic to their nationalist cause. One of the countries that was openly supportive of the Indian nationalists then was Germany. Germany's Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg and the German Intelligence Bureau for the East, which was headed by Max von Oppenheim, were open to the idea of Indian nationalists working in Berlin then. To that end, an office was prepared for the Indian nationalist leaders in Berlin and the Berlin-based "German committee" was set up under the leadership of C. R. Pillay and V. N. Chatterjee. Arthur Zimmermann, then head of the German Foreign Affairs committee was supportive of the Berlin committee group, and efforts were then made by the Germans to help the Indian nationalists in their plans to hasten the collapse of British colonial rule in India. In 1914–1917, the Berlin committee worked closely with other Indian nationalist activists and movements across Europe and the United States of America to do as much as they could to stall the British war effort, with German support. Plans were made to assassinate Lord Kitchener, who was then the Secretary of State for War, and Lord Grey, who was Foreign Secretary, but neither came to fruition. Muhammad Barkatullah was then based in Europe and left in charge with the procurement of explosive devices, most of which never reached their appointed destinations due to the co-ordinated efforts of British, French and Swiss intelligence agencies. The most elaborate plot of all involved the transport of more than 10,000 small arms (rifles) and four million rounds of ammunition from the United States to India via Batavia, Bangkok and Burma—but this plot was also uncovered in the end. The discovery of the arms plot led to the Hindu-German conspiracy trial, which lasted for several years and became the longest-running trial in American history then. The trial was set in the courthouse of San Francisco and ended almost a year later in April 1918. On the final day of the trial, the lead suspect among those accused, Ram Chandra, was shot by another suspect in the courtroom itself, leading to accusations of the trial being a "show trial" and a cover-up. During the trial process itself, American public opinion remained divided as there remained many quarters of American society that were sympathetic to the Indian nationalist cause and opposed to European imperialism in Asia. Germany's ambassador in the United States Count Johann von Bernstoff attempted to take possession of the weapons shipment, claiming that they were meant for Germany's colonial forces in the East African colonies, but without success. The failure to send the weapons to the Indian radical nationalists in India meant that the planned revolt of the Indian colonial army was not able to take place, and allowed Britain to maintain its hold on India for another three decades at least. As a result of the discoveries of the Hindu-German conspiracy, Britain's intelligence ties with the United States were to improve in the decades to come. Initially, American intelligence and security services were reluctant to openly restrict the activities of the Indian nationalists in their own territory, but following the Hindu-German conspiracy trial the intelligence agencies of both countries would work closer together. [Re: Harald Fischer-Tine, "Indian Nationalism and the World Forces: Transnational and Diasporic dimensions of the Indian Freedom Movement on the Eve of the First World War", in: *Journal of Global History 2* , pp. 325–244, Cambridge, 2007; Karl Hoover, *The Hindu Conspiracy in California*, German Studies Review, German Studies Association, 1985; Joan M. Jensen, "The 'Hindu Conspiracy': A Reassessment", in The Pacific Historical Review Vol.48, No.1., University of California Press, 1979.]

[8] During and after this period, Britain's Indian Political Intelligence Office, which was headed by John Wallinger, was allowed to expand and recruit more intelligence operatives. In order to check on the development of the Indian nationalist movement abroad, the Indian Intelligence office eventually expanded the scope of its activities all the way to Europe and Southeast Asia. One of the more prominent recruits to the service was the author Somerset Maugham, who was recruited in 1915 and asked to maintain his public role as a writer, which in turn allowed him to travel relatively freely across Europe and Asia then.

hundreds and thousands of miles away would have an impact on the Indian Muslims of Southeast Asia. While the British colonial authorities in India were worried about the impact that growing Indian nationalism in Europe and America might have on their own power in India, an event took place in Southeast Asia that demonstrated the extent to which the Indian Muslim diaspora was intimately connected with the wider Indian Muslim diaspora worldwide: The Mutiny of the 5th Light Infantry Sepoys in Singapore in February 1915.

Background to the 1915 Indian Muslim Mutiny in Singapore

At the turn of the twentieth century, life for the Indian Muslims of Singapore was relatively easy as the structure of the plural economic system that had been put into place allowed migrants from India, China and other parts of the world to set up their enterprises with little fanfare and to prosper as long as they abided by the laws of the Straits Settlements.

Yet the Sepoy Mutiny of 1915 was sparked by one Kassim Mansur, who was an Indian Muslim of Gujerati descent and who, in 1915, had set up his business in Singapore as one of the many Indian Muslim merchants there. Mansur, like many other Indian Muslims of his generation, had come to Singapore to start a new life as a merchant in the import-export business and had grown considerably wealthy thanks to the coffee-shop that he ran. Mansur's own status as colonial subject meant that he was subject to the laws of Britain and the Empire, though this did not alter the fact that as an Indian and a Muslim, he also owed his loyalties elsewhere as well.

At the outset of the First World War, many Indian Muslims in Singapore, British Malaya and British Burma would find themselves in a predicament similar to his, having to demonstrate their loyalties to the British crown while remaining Muslims by faith and Indians by ethnicity. However, prosperity alone offered little solace to Indian Muslims like Mansur when they realized that the outset of the First World War would pit the forces of the British Empire against the armies of Ottoman Turkey, long considered by Indian Muslims the world over as the final bulwark of Muslim power following the collapse of Moghul rule in India.

Even before the advent of the *Khilafat* movement[9] in India, Indian Muslim in India and the other colonies of Britain were wary of the prospect of having to choose between the British Empire and the Ottoman Caliphate.

As soon as Ottoman Turkey threw its lot with the Germans and became a member of the Central Powers axis, it was clear that the Muslim subjects of the British Empire were expected to remain loyal to the Crown of England and turn against their fellow Muslim brothers instead. Keenly aware of the difficulty that would be posed by this moral dilemma faced by millions of Muslim colonial subjects the world over, Sultan Mehmet V of Turkey issued a *fatwa* calling on the Muslims of the world to unite and to support the Caliphate above all else. For the Indian Muslims who were then residing in the crown colonies of Britain, this proved to be a rallying call that was difficult to ignore as well as a dilemma that was impossible to resolve.

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[9] The *Khilafat* Movement began as a reaction among Muslims worldwide to the perceived threat that the Ottoman Caliphate was about to be dismantled in the wake of the First World War. Ottoman Turkey had sided with the Germans during the First World War, and was likewise defeated by the allied forces. The treaties of Versailles (1919) and Sevres (1920) proceeded to reduce the territory of the Ottoman Empire and led to the creation of a host of new independent Arab states that came under the protection of the British and the French, respectively. At the same time, a new generation of Turkish nationalists dubbed the "Young Turks" under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk were equally bent on dismantling the Ottoman Caliphate in order to create the modern Republic of Turkey and to transfer the seat of political power to the Turkish national assembly. Consequently, Indian Muslim activist leaders like Maulana Mohammad Ali Jouhar began to call on India's Muslims to rise up against the British for the latter's role in the slow destruction of the Caliphate. Describing the British as infidel enemies of Islam who wished to destroy the last bastion of Muslim political power, Maulana Mohammad urged Muslims to come together to fight against British colonial rule and to support the Ottoman Sultan. Maulana Mohammad was supported by other Indian Muslim leaders like Maulana Shaukat Ali, Maulana Ahmed Ansari, Hazrat Mohani, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in setting up the All-India Khilafat Committee in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, in 1919. Cognisant of the power and influence of the Khilafat Committee, the Indian nationalist leaders of the Indian National Congress sought to work with them in a demonstration of Pan-Indian solidarity with their fellow Indian Muslims. In 1920, the Congress formally aligned itself with the Khilafat movement and the Khilafat movement's cause was endorsed by Congress leaders like Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi urged the Muslims of India to work with the Congress in the combined struggle to free India from colonial rule and to protect the Caliphate at the same time. In 1920–1921, thousands of Indian Muslims from the northern provinces of Sindh, Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province were asked to migrate—on foot—to Afghanistan by crossing the great Khyber Pass. More than 20,000 ordinary Indian Muslims, mostly from the poorer strata of Indian society, attempted the migration to Afghanistan, which they regarded as part of *Dar'ul Islam*. The great *hijra* proved to be one of the biggest humanitarian disasters of the Indian proto-nationalist struggle, for thousands of Muslims were attacked, robbed and killed by dacoits along the way; and were not welcomed by the Afghans who regarded them as interlopers. Notwithstanding this major disaster, the leaders of the Indian Khilafat movement continued in their work to propagate their cause worldwide. Working through the formal and informal networks of communication that connected the domains of the British Empire, delegations were sent by the Indian Khilafat Committee across India, and to Burma, Malaya, Singapore and beyond. It was the final defeat of the Ottoman Sultan and the declaration of the new secular Republic of Turkey by Kemal Ataturk in 1924 that eventually marked the end of the Khilafat project.

Faced with such an existential dilemma, Kassim Mansur sought the help and advice of Nur Alam Shah, one of the local *imams* in Singapore. Both men were of Indian origin and belonged to the Muslim faith; and both of them regarded their presence and role in the stratified plural economy of the colony as problematic. It was Nur Alam Shah who first raised the concern of the Ghadar movement in America and Europe, and who felt that the time had come for both of them to lend a hand in the pan-Indian campaign to liberate India from the clutches of the British. Between the two of them, the plan for the Sepoy Mutiny of 1915 was laid out.

Singapore was then a transit point for various military units that served the British Empire and its eastern dominions. Since the time of Raffles and Minto, Singapore had been the most important maritime base for Britain's seaborne military adventures in the East. t was from Singapore that the troops of the British colonial army were sent to take control of Java during the Napoleonic wars; it was from Singapore that British colonial troops were sent to defeat the forces of the Burmese kingdom during the first, second and third Anglo-Burmese wars; and it was from Singapore that British colonial troops were regularly sent out to quell disturbances in the Malay Peninsula, Hong Kong and as far as China.

As such, there were few permanent military units stationed in Singapore save for smaller units such as the Malay States Guides. When the First World War was declared, the most significant fighting unit based on the island was the Yorkshire Light Infantry, which was later seconded to the Western front in France to hold off the advancing forces of the German Kaiser. Fearful of leaving the island undefended, the 5th Indian Native Light Infantry battalion was called from Madras to plug the gap.

In October 1914, the Indian native unit finally arrived in Singapore where they had never been stationed before. None of the members of the Indian native force had any knowledge of Singapore, and were not acquainted with the social norms and cosmopolitan make-up of the island colony. By the time the 5th Light Infantry had settled in their barracks, however, the British colonial authorities had been warned of the "Ghadar conspiracy" that had been hatched by Indian nationalists in the United States of America, and how the Ghadarites intended to disrupt the British war effort by causing chaos in the colonies. (An earlier plot to get the soldiers of the 130th

Baluchi Regiment to mutiny in Rangoon was discovered and foiled on 21 January 1915.) What the authorities in Singapore did not realize or expect was the possibility that the Indian troops in Singapore might be instigated to do the same by some of the Indian Muslims who were already settled on the island.

During the trial that came after the mutiny had been put down, it was revealed that Kassim Mansur and Nur Alam Shah had managed to gain access to the members of the 5th Light Infantry battalion, and invited their leaders to Mansur's home. In early February, the Indian soldiers were informed that they were about to be shipped to Hong Kong on the HMS Nile and stationed at the Hong Kong garrison. Many of the members of the battalion were, however, worried that they might be diverted to the Western front and forced to fight against the Turks instead. Mansur and Nur Alam Shah persuaded the members of the battalion to turn their guns against their commanding officers (who were all British) and to do their part in the global war against the *kafirs*, who were battling against their Muslim brothers defending the Caliphate in the West. Plans were laid out and the mutiny began on 15 February 1915, leading to the loss of 47 lives, the capture of the mutineers and the execution of the ring-leaders of the mutiny in May.[10]

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[10] The mutiny of the 5th Light Infantry Native Battalion took place around 3p.m. on 15 February 1915, when the members of the unit turned their guns against their commanding officers and occupied the barracks. Eight hundred and fifty members of the unit joined the mutiny, and were made up exclusively of Indian Muslims. Along with them were around a hundred members of the Malay States Guides who commanded their own mule battery, carrying light ordinance. The plan of the mutineers was to raid the barracks at Tanglin, seize weapons and then occupy parts of Singapore town. As the mutineers reached the barracks at Tanglin Hill, they discovered that 300 German soldiers had been kept there, after being taken prisoner from the German vessel *SMS Emden*. The German prisoners refused to join in the mutiny but were allowed to occupy the barracks. The mutineers then made their way to the docks where they proceeded to sabotage the works at Keppel harbour and Pasir Panjang. Along the way, they also attacked European civilians. The mutineers then laid siege to the residence of the commander of British forces in Singapore, Colonel E. Martin. Order was only restored when British marines from the *HMS Cadmus* were landed ashore and allowed to enter Singapore town to engage in street-to-street fighting with the mutineers. In the meantime, the commander of the British forces issued a general call for help, asking for the assistance of any allied vessels that were in the Malacca Straits at the time. In response, the French Cruiser *Montcalm*, the Russian Cruiser *Aural* and the Japanese battleships *Otawa* and *Tsushima* arrived 48 hours later (17 Feb) and landed their troops ashore to help support the British regain control of Singapore. The mutiny was finally crushed with the arrival of the 5th Shropshire Infantry Regiment from Rangoon, who managed to secure Singapore town and round up the remnants of the mutineers. Those mutineers who attempted to escape were later captured by the soldiers of the Sultan of Johore's army, across the Johore Strait. [Re: Sho Kuwajima, *The First World War in Asia: the Indian Mutiny in Singapore*. Osaka University, Osaka, 1988; Harry Miller and R. W. E. Harper, *The Singapore Mutiny*, Oxford University Press, Singapore, 1984.]

The Singapore Mutiny came as a blow to the British colonial authorities in Singapore as it signalled the loss of control over what was then regarded as one of their most precious colonies in the Far East. Cognisant of the strategic importance of the island as both a commercial centre as well as military base, the British authorities wasted little time before they meted out the sentences on those found guilty: Kassim Mansur and 47 other Indian Muslim mutineers were publicly executed by firing squad by the walls of Outram Prison, witnessed by 15,000 spectators.[11] Imam Nur Alam Shah was arrested, found guilty of hatching the plot and of being a member and supporter of the outlawed Ghadar movement. He was later detained and deported permanently from Singapore, never allowed to return again.

However, the real damage to British-Indian relations came later when, as a consequence of the mutiny and the sense of distrust that had developed among the British colonial authorities, new regulations were drawn up to register the entry and monitor the activities of all Indian colonial subjects in Singapore. By then, Britain's attitudes towards Indians in Singapore, British Malaya and British Burma had changed: Unlike the Chinese migrants and settlers who remained largely supportive (or indifferent) of the British war effort in Europe,[12] Indian settlers were subsequently regarded as a potential fifth column that could strike at the Empire from within.

Colonial race-relations suffered accordingly, and was further worsened by the new laws and regulations such as the Reserve Force Ordinance of 1915, which required compulsory military service from all colonial subjects between the ages of 15 to 55. Indian Muslims came under greater scrutiny and their activities—notably in publishing and the vernacular Indian press—were monitored constantly.

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[11] Apart from the 47 mutineers who were shot at Outram Prison, many of the other members of the 5th Light Infantry battalion were also punished: 64 of them were transported for life and 73 of them imprisoned.

[12] There were no British colonial army units that were comprised of ethnic Chinese soldiers at the time in Singapore, or in any of the other colonies. However, the Chinese in the Straits Settlements of Singapore, Penang and Malacca were by and large supportive of the British war effort and demonstrated their loyalty to the Empire by contributing funds. The Chinese chambers of commerce in both Penang and Singapore collected donations from Chinese businessmen and entrepreneurs in order to purchase supplies for the British army. In Malaya and Singapore, the Chinese business community contributed enough funds to pay for 53 war planes for the British air force.

At the root of the fear and anxiety of the colonial administrators was the incompatibility of two warring logics: The homogenizing logic of Empire on the one hand, that necessarily reduced differences of culture, belief and origin to the horizontal register of a common colonial citizen-subjecthood; and the reality of governing an extended global empire where cultural differences and religious pluralism were the norms. The colonial administrators then could not reconcile the need to maintain such a large empire that necessarily called upon the services of native subjects with the reality that those native subjects would themselves be cosmopolitan individuals who had many different identities at the same time: The soldiers of the 5th Light Infantry battalion were typical colonial subjects in this respect: they were culturally Indian, Muslim in their beliefs, and contracted soldiers by profession. To the shock and horror of their British commanders, they demonstrated that primordial attachments to homeland and religion superseded their contractual bonds to their employer, the British colonial army. As a result of this revelation that was announced in rather bloody terms, the British colonial authorities and commanders of the colonial armed forces came to realize that ethnic and religious bonds could not be weakened despite years of military training and discipline, and that fellow-feeling could only be guaranteed among fellow Europeans.

Crucially, for the Indian Muslims of Singapore—and other migrants of Indian origin by extension—their loyalty to the British Empire and to Singapore as their new home was put into question. In the years to come, the colonial subjects of Indian origin would be expected to demonstrate their loyalty to the Empire and the British Crown time and again; and time and again, the limits of Empire and its hold on the subjectivities of its subjects would be put to the test.

In the intervening years of the 1920s and 1930s, the loyalty of the *Chinese* colonial subjects would also be put to question, due to their attachments to China and their support for the Chinese nationalist movement and the Chinese communist party, respectively.[13] The vast repertoire of new rules and regulations that were introduced

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[13] While the Chinese in Singapore were largely neutral during and after the First World War, many of them grew politically involved with the rise of Chinese nationalism and the Chinese Communist Party in China. If the Indian Muslims were suspected of having transnational pan-Islamic loyalties, the Chinese would later be suspected of having trans-national Chinese nationalist and communist leanings instead: The roots of the Malayan Communist Party go back to the South Seas Communist Party

to police, monitor and control the behaviour and activities of the colonial subjects in the wake of the 1915 mutiny demonstrated the weakening grip of Empire in Southeast Asia, which in turn only helped to fuel this Eurocentric apprehension even further: No longer deemed as *loyal subjects* who could be relied upon in time of need, the Indian subjects of the colonies—and the Indian Muslims in particular—would be watched, followed, spied on and treated as the *mistrusted Other* who had to be kept at bay.

Following the Singapore Mutiny, the British colonial administration in British Malaya was likewise wary of the role played by Indian Muslim migrants who were mainly engaged in trade as well as enlisted as members of the colonial defence forces. The next great challenge that had to be faced was the mobilization of Indian Muslims in British Malaya and Singapore that took off when the *Khilafat* movement was created at the end of the First World War. And even after the *Khilafat* movement had died its natural death following the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924, the resentment of the Indian Muslim colonial subjects would remain and would be tapped by both the Japanese and Indian Nationalists at the outset of the Second World War: It was hardly a surprise then that so many Indian colonial subjects lent their weight to the Indian

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(SSCP), which was formed in Singapore in 1928. Two years later, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) was formed (illegally) in 1930. Despite the secrecy surrounding the event, Leng, (2000) has noted that the launch was witnessed by at least one important communist leader destined to play an important role in the communist struggle in Southeast Asia: Quyen Ai Quoc @ Ho Chi Minh (who stood as the Eastern representative of the COMINTERN). The MCP's ideology was summed up by its "eight great postulates" and "ten great guiding principles" taken from the Communist Party of China (Ibid., p. 68). The British colonial authorities were initially wary of the MCP and regarded them as a security threat to the Empire and its colonies. But during the Second World War, the British were forced to rely on the MCP for support in their struggle against the Japanese: MCP guerrillas who were trained by British army officers fought and worked alongside other forces such as Force 136 and the Malay militias. The MCP organized its own militia, the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA); and the 1st regiment of MPAJA was established at Serendah, Selangor on 1 February 1942. After the war, the British worked fast to regain control of their colony and to establish military rule across British Malaya. Negotiations for a ceasefire with the MCP/MPAJA broke down and in 1948 a state of Emergency was declared and the MCP was banned. As a result, the MCP and its MPAJA guerillas took to the jungles to wage a guerilla war against the British colonial government and its armed forces. The anti-Communist insurgency continued long after Malaysia and Singapore gained their independence and by the 1970s the MCP and its armed units were forced to retreat to the rural interior and finally found refuge along the border with Thailand. As the Cold War came to an end, the Malaysian government agreed to end the conflict as long as the former members of the MCP/MPAJA gave up their arms and returned to non-political civilian life. [Lim Cheng Leng, *The Story of a Psy-Warrior: Tan Sri Dr. C. C. Too*, Batu Caves: Interpress Printers, 2000; Kumar Ramakrishna, "The Making of a Malayan Propagandist: The Communists, the British and C. C. Too", *JMBRAS*, LXXIII(1), 2000; A. E. Percival, *The War in Malaya*, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1949; Hua Wu Yin, *Class and Communalism in Malaysia*, London: Zeb Books, 1983.]

National Army[14] (*Azad Hind Fauj*, INA), which turned against the British following the defeat of British forces in Asia. And of course it is not a coincidence that the INA was founded in the most cosmopolitan colonial entrepot in all of the Empire: Singapore.

IV. Lessons from the 1915 Singapore Mutiny: Racial and religious profiling and the self-defeating logic of oppositional dialectics

What were the lessons learnt from the 1915 Singapore Mutiny, and how and why is that singular event relevant to us today?

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[14] The Indian National Army (*Azad Hind Fauj*) was created in Singapore in 1942 under the leadership of Mohan Singh and with the assistance of the Japanese Army. In January 1943, the INA came under the leadership of the Indian nationalist leader Subhas Chandra Bose who declared the INA to be the military wing of the Provisional Government of Free India (*Arzi Hukumat-e-Azad Hind*). By then, the INA had around 40,000 members as the mainstay of the fighting force. Bose had been living in exile outside India after he left the Indian National Congress and was forced to flee India for fear of being detained by the British. Though the INA was never a potent military force, its symbolic power as a tool for Indian Nationalist propaganda was considerable. The most significant element of the INA was its lack of caste awareness and the fact that it united Indians on the basis of a common Indian identity and a commitment to Indian national liberation and self-determination. Muslims as well as Hindus were found in the army and the INA's leadership comprised of Hindu and Muslim Indians from all stations of Indian social life. Significantly, the INA also helped to generate an awareness of a common Indian identity among the Indian diaspora in Southeast Asia, and heightened their sense of commitment towards India as their home country. The INA itself was not well-armed: Only 16,000 small arms were issued to the INA and many of the battalions were equipped with stock taken from the British army units that had surrendered. The INA lacked heavy ordinance and was given mortars at best, along with Bren guns and Vickers Machine-guns as well as British-issued hand grenades. Between 1944 and 1945, the INA was sent to take part in the Burma campaign alongside Japanese forces. The INA units conducted guerrilla warfare and were meant to infiltrate into India and to work among local communities to cause unrest and fan anti-British sentiments. By the end of the war, the INA was forced to retreat back to Thailand and then to Singapore. Most of the INA units had to be disbanded and re-amalgamated to form new units as supplies decreased. Subhas Chandra Bose left for Manchuria in September 1945, but was reported to be killed when his plane crashed. By the end of the war, the returning British and allied forces rounded up the remnants of the INA and had them shipped back to India via Chittagong and Calcutta to stand for trial. The surviving leaders of the INA would later enter Indian social and political life: Major General Shah Nawaz Khan was elevated to the post of Minister for Railways; Lakshmi Shangal later joined the Indian Communist Party and Ram Singh Thakur who had composed the INA's anthem later composed the Indian national anthem as well. Significantly, the members and leaders of the INA in the other British colonies of Southeast Asia also rose to positions of prominence in their respective societies: When the Malayan Indian Congress (MIC) was formed under the leadership of John Thivy, many of is founder-leaders were themselves former members of the INA—such as Janaky Athinahappan, who was the second-in-command of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment. She later rose to the position of Senator in the Malaysian government. Another member of the Rani of Jhansi Regiment, Rassamah Bhupalan rose to become one of the first women's rights activists of Malaysia and a welfare-activist. [Re: Lebra, Joyce C., *Jungle Alliance, Japan and the Indian National Army*; and *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia*, Hong Kong: Heinemann, 1977; Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean During the Age of Empire*, Harvard University Press, 2006; K. K. Ghosh, *The Indian National Army: The Second Front in the Indian Nationalist Movement*, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1969; Hukam Chand, *A History of Modern India,* Anmol Press, Delhi, 2005; Peter Fay, *The Forgotten Army: India's Struggle for Independence,* Ann Arbour, University of Michigan Press, 1993.]

In the immediate context of the mutiny and the events that followed, the Singapore Mutiny of 1915 showed in the clearest terms that it was no longer possible for the British colonial authorities to expect and demand loyalty from their colonial subjects. Needless to say, it was impossible for the soldiers of the 5th Light Infantry battalion to feel loyal to Singapore, or to even harbour any notion of Singaporean identity as they were themselves itinerant soldiers who were expected to move wherever and whenever they were ordered to. (And they had just landed in Singapore a few months before the mutiny themselves.)

As we have argued above, the most serious implications of the mutiny were felt by the colonial subjects of Indian ethnicity and origin in Singapore as well as British Burma and Malaya then: For what the mutiny demonstrated in no uncertain terms was the fact that despite the outreach of the British Empire, it was impossible for the imperial authorities to force the colonial subjects to give up their cosmopolitan and multifarious attachments to ethnicity, language, religion and homeland. The Empire was indeed global and cosmopolitan, but even the panoptic vision of the Empire could not render secondary the residual attachments to primordial loyalties of ethnicity and faith; and even the Empire could not prevent the persistence of vertical cleavages of ethnic and religious identity and belonging among its subjects.

The second lesson to be drawn is the deleterious effects of racial, ethnic and religious stereotyping and profiling, which came in the wake of the Singapore Mutiny, for it turned out that by relegating the Indian colonial subjects to the negative category of *suspected Others*, they were in fact marginalized even further, adding to their sense of alienation. The narrative of Imperial dominion attempted to disguise the realities of the uneven power-relations between colonizers and the colonized, but the myth of Imperial cosmopolitanism was laid bare as a result of the new laws and regulations that were introduced to police, monitor and control the behaviour of the Indian colonial subjects across the Empire.

What the 1915 mutiny did was expose the deeper levels of resentment and frustration among Indian Muslim colonial subjects who did not buy into the myth of an imperial family of nations living in harmony with each other. In the inter-war years of the 20s and 30s, the memory of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1915 (and the punishment meted out to

the mutineers afterwards) was kept alive by Indian proto-nationalists who later lent their support to the Japanese occupation army and the Indian National Army in Singapore. The singular event of the 1915 mutiny therefore exposed the weaknesses and contradictions of an imperial socio-economic-political order that was kept together by force and the threat of violence, and made it obvious that the imperial family of nations was a loose instrumental assembly of peoples, divided between the colonized and the colonizers.

For the sake of our immediate concerns today, we can see that such strategies of ethnic and religious profiling have done little to assuage the concerns of Muslims worldwide, who likewise feel that their membership with/to the international fraternity of nations is probationary.

This is perhaps one of the most damaging consequences of the War on Terror discourse: By framing Terrorism as being somehow connected to Islam and Muslim religious and social normativity, it has created a chain of equivalences that equates Islam with all that is wrong and/or antithetical to the West, while leaving both categories (the "West" and "Islam") uninterrogated and essentialized. Such simple reductionism may seem to be part and parcel of any form of dialectics, but in the case of this particular discourse the narrative of the War on Terror has been staged out in the arena of international politics with very real political and geo-strategic consequences, not to mention the enormous human costs involved.

Suspicion of Islam and Muslim normativity strikes at the heart of Muslim identity itself, and the oppositional dialectics of the War on Terror that has forced Muslim nations and governments to take sides has meant that Muslim identity itself has become problematized—though not by Muslims. This has fuelled resentment and anger among Muslims worldwide and in the long run we can all see where this will lead us to: As long as the identity of Muslims is deemed problematic, then Muslims—who choose to be Muslims and who will not and cannot abandon their Muslim identity—will be faced with the false choice of conforming to some Western standard of acceptable behaviour or to defend their religious identity on their own terms. This has benefited only those who wish to perpetuate the logic of the War on Terror—

notably the proponents of the War on Terror themselves and their *Jihadist*[15] adversaries—but it has done little to add to genuine dialogue and an acceptance of difference as a reality of the cosmopolitan world we live in.

At the heart of the problem is the logic of oppositional dialectics itself, and the manner in which such modes of dyadic antagonism leads to adversarialism and conflict. This poses a more difficult and complex question that is perhaps beyond the scope of this paper. Can we ever think of a mode of identity politics that does not rest on dialectics, and a dialectics of opposition in particular? Granted that any sense of identity requires some sense difference and mode of differentiation, can we nonetheless think of a mode of differentiation that does not lead us to the negative stereotyping of the Other as the constitutive Other to ourselves?

Perhaps one way out of this problem is to accept the fact that while identities are discursively constructed, they need not be couched solely or primarily in oppositional terms against the Other; and to insist instead on the fact that identities are never essentialized but rather composite and complex—in short, *cosmopolitan*.

As we have seen in the case of the Sepoy Mutiny of 1915, the status and identity of Indian Muslim colonial subjects were put to the test when Indian Muslim soldiers were expected to retain their loyalty to the Empire at the expense of other loyalties (religious and ethnic) that they held equally dear and crucial to their sense of Selfhood. To accept that citizen-subjects can (and indeed do) have multiple identities that overlap and contest one another may be a more realistic way to imagine any sense of political belonging in diverse and complex societies, where a plethora of subject-citizens will have to learn to live with one another despite the internally-complex constitution of their private selves. This was clearly beyond the pale of acceptability

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[15] Again, we need to re-state the obvious fact that the War on Terror discourse finds its mirror counterpart in the equally reductionist and essentialist discourse of many violent and exclusive religio-political groups as well. If the discourse on the War on Terror has created a chain of equivalences that equates Islam with violence and terrorism, then a similar observation can be made about the exclusive religio-political discourse of *Jihadi* groups that combined both a Utopian vision of an Islamic future with a blanket denial and denunciation of the West and all things Western, forming its own chain of equivalences where the "West" (understood in the most general abstract manner) is equated with all that is un-Islamic, immoral, decadent, violent, oppressive and corrupt. Seen from the point of view of the Wittgensteinian notion of discourses as language-games, it can be argued that the discourse of the War on Terror and the discourse of Islamic *Jihadism* are two separate language games that do not actually engage in any meaningful dialogue with each other.

during the height of colonial power, where loyalty to the Empire was the prerequisite to membership of the imperial community of nations.

However, in the context of today's globalized world where communities reside and overlap with one another in such close proximity, such a nuanced sense of identity and belonging may be the way to ensure that we do not return to the path of oppositional identity politics and its attendant strategies of policing, surveillance and state violence. All over the world, the debate over identity-politics and the future of multicultural cosmopolitan societies is being heatedly conducted. In the West, fear and anxiety over the imagined "Islamization" of Western Europe has led to moral panic and the call for Europe to re-assert its identity, albeit couched in terms that deny the constructiveness and contingency of European history itself. The protests against the wearing of the *Hijab*, the construction of mosques in countries like France, Holland, Denmark and Switzerland, all point to the fear that the constitutive Other is now within. In Muslim societies, on the other hand, similar concerns have been raised about "Westernization" and its attendant contagions: secularism, materialism, feminism, democratization, etc.

The sharpening of boundaries (political, territorial as well as epistemic) between the West and the Muslim worlds has been one of the side-effects of the War on Terror and its polarizing logic. At the root of the problem is the inability and unwillingness to accept the contingent, complex and composite nature of our identities that are—necessarily—diachronic and historically as well as socially contextualized. The challenge that this poses for all societies and states today is having to accept and live with the cosmopolitanism that is the symptom of modern life in a globalized world, and to perhaps realize that while states and societies do have a levelling effect on individual subject-citizens, they cannot erase the multitude of other competing loyalties that individuals may have and live by. So far such an attempt at a critical understanding of identity politics has been left to the academic domain and has not been translated to political praxis.

Left as we are with the modern nation-state, we need to ask if the state can govern over complex plural societies where cosmopolitanism has become, and will remain, a defining feature of subjectivity and citizenship. In the European Union as it is in

ASEAN today, states are still grappling with the challenge of how to accommodate plural subject-positions and identities while trying to keep the fabric of society and the public domain intact. Learning to live with and adapt to the religio-cultural attachments and loyalties of subject-citizens will have to be one of the priorities of states today, like it or not: for such loyalties—as we have seen from past and recent case-studies—are not about to disappear anytime soon.

Historical examples and case studies such as the 1915 Singapore Sepoy Mutiny may be instructive in helping us understand the dynamics of oppositional dialectics and the effects of the politics of othering, but they cannot—and seldom do—persuade those with invested interests to interrogate their own settled assumptions, change tack and alter the trajectory of their policies. History may instruct, but it cannot compel: There lies its strength but also its weakness.

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