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## Khan Artist

*Imran Khan, the man who sparked the Newsweek riots: Islamist politician by day, London playboy by night.*

by James Forsyth and Jai Singh

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WITH 17 PEOPLE DEAD and anti-American sentiment even higher than usual in the Muslim world, people are looking for someone to blame for the riots that flowed from *Newsweek's* Koran story. So far, it has been pinned on everyone from Mark Whitaker to the U.S. military. But the real villain is Pakistani politician Imran Khan.

On Friday, May 6 Khan catapulted the 300-word *Newsweek* story about a Koran being flushed down the toilet into headline news across the Muslim world by brandishing the article at a press conference and demanding that Pakistani president Gen. Pervez Musharraf secure an apology from George W. Bush for the incident. It is unlikely Khan chanced upon the item. Just days before, Khan had tried to spark a similar firestorm over a *Washington Times* cartoon depicting the Pakistani government as America's lapdog. Clearly in search of grist for the anti-American mill, Khan's demagoguery speaks to his own two-facedness and to a downside of military rule in Pakistan.

KHAN EMBODIES THE HYPOCRISY of Muslim elites who inveigh against the West by day and enjoy its pleasures by night. His fame in Pakistan comes from cricket not politics: Khan is the best cricketer Pakistan has ever produced. But in London many remember him as an even greater playboy. Throughout the 1980s Khan was linked to a string of beautiful women. In 1988 he told Australia's *Sunday Mail*, "Pakistan society encourages marriage. There, I lead a very steady, comfortable life. Here, it is more exciting. The pace is faster. Because of the nightclubs and parties, it is a very good place to be single."

But as his cricket career wound down and he began to develop political ambitions, Khan became more reticent about his lifestyle. In 1992 when a London *Evening Standard* reporter asked him if he found his conquests fulfilling he turned bashful: "Er, by answering that question I put myself in a difficult position because this will get quoted in Pakistan. And in Pakistan, the mere fact that you admit you're having affairs upsets a lot of people's sensitivities. I respect my own culture and a lot of young people look up to me. It's a big responsibility for me not to make these admissions in public. Everyone knows I'm a single man and a normal man. But there's no need to stick it down their throats." His ex-girlfriends were less discreet, though. One observed to the *Times*, that same year, that Imran "juggled his girlfriends extremely elegantly . . . and he likes mangoes."

After his playing career ended in 1992, Khan entered politics under the tutelage of Lt.-Gen. Hamid Gul, the former Pakistani intelligence chief famous for fueling the Taliban's rise in Afghanistan. (Gul believes that September 11 was a U.S. conspiracy.) Khan, a man who once captained the Oxford University cricket team and was a feature at London's trendiest places, now turned against the culture he had previously enjoyed.

In 1995 he denounced the West with its "fat women in miniskirts" (presumably the skinny ones in miniskirts Khan had dated were okay) and proclaimed that the "West is falling because of their addiction to sex and obscenity." He also chastised Pakistanis who looked to the West for ideas, saying "I hate it when our leaders or elite feel that by licking the soles of the feet of foreign countries we will somehow be given aid and we will progress."

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