

Global Intifadah? September 11th and the Struggle within Islam

Arshin Adib-Moghaddam
University of Cambridge

Abstract *Against the background of two dominant world order theories—the ‘End of History’ and the ‘Clash of Civilisations’—this article argues that September 11th epitomised two interrelated patterns in world politics: first, the idiosyncrasies and perils of globalisation and second the struggle between different directions in contemporary ‘Muslim’ politics. The former challenges the traditional view that links globalisation solely to phenomena such as economic integration or the spread of liberal-democratic values, while the latter refers to intra-regional developments in the ‘Muslim’ world, questioning the characterisation of ‘Islam’ as a monolithic entity destined to challenge the security of the ‘West’. Taken together, these two patterns defy traditional categories of international relations, touching on issues ranging from the role of the state to national security considerations.¹*

In the immediate aftermath of the suicide attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, politicians and intellectuals alike were struggling to evaluate the impact of September 11th, 2001 on the future of world politics. While it seemed, to some, that something, if not everything, had changed, the controversies about the causes and consequences of the attacks in the United States appeared diffuse. Several questions remain unanswered: How does September 11th fit into our traditional understanding of forces opposing and driving globalisation? How does the presence of violent transnational networks challenge traditional categories of the discipline of international relations such as state-centrism or national security? What is the role of political Islam in world politics? What are the prospects of multilateral cooperation in the changed climate of international politics since September 11th?

The facts on the ground created by the attack on the ruling Taliban movement in Afghanistan and blunt suggestions about new paradigms of world politics supersede the debates about the causes and consequences of September 11th, which remain constrained by the initial impediment of eclecticism. In such an environment of guided confusion, persistent myths provide an arsenal of rhetorical abuse, ready to be utilised by radical elements in the governments involved in the current conflict. Scholars writing within the realm of international relations (IR), a discipline that itself is in a state of ‘ferment and

¹ For his critical reading and helpful comments, the author would like to thank Charles Jones, Centre of International Studies, University of Cambridge.

confusion',² implicitly failed to address that normative dilemma of disentangling myths from facts. Driven by the elusive pretext of parsimony dominating the discourse in some academic circles, holistic world order theories oversimplify the inherent complexity of world politics in favour of mono-causal mechanisms based on static, *a priori* defined pseudo-theoretical constructs. The exclusiveness of some of the categories chosen and the chronic lack of empathy translates into the failure of constructing a framework for inclusive dialogue. This paper shares the view that such a reasoned dialogue can only evolve if world politics in general and September 11th in particular are appreciated as global with equally global causes and consequences.³

In this article it is argued that September 11th indeed initiated new patterns in world politics that challenge our understanding of the unipolar transition period characterised by the dominance of the US as the triumphant power after the demise of the Soviet Union and confusion about the future world order. The modifications are linked to emerging patterns of engagement on the one side and asymmetrical threats to security on the other. The incentive of diplomatic engagement on the basis of reciprocal dialogue is catalysed by an increased demand for multilateral solutions to existing conflicts and necessitated by a sense of security interdependence on the systemic level of international politics. The argument of interdependence is in sharp contrast to the vitriolic tone of the dominant 'Clash of Civilisations'⁴ prophecy and relates to two alternative views on the causes and consequences of September 11th: first, the re-evaluation of the idiosyncrasies and perils of globalisation and second the divergence of different directions in contemporary 'Muslim' politics. The former challenges the persistent view that one can attribute a unidirectional automatism to globalisation. In other words, it is problematic to assume that economic integration or the spread of liberal-democracy are the only, exclusive categories of globalisation and that their triumph on a global scale is inevitable. The implicit claim of the supremacy of supposedly 'Western' values tied to the notion of an unequivocal affirmation of the mechanisms of globalisation is discussed against the background of the 'End of History' thesis espoused by Francis Fukuyama⁵ in the first section of this article. It is argued that if we are to accept the convergence among social scientists that globalisation denotes the increasing linkage between human activities across regions and continents as a result both of technological and social change,⁶ the forces behind September 11th are as much related to globalisation as MTV Europe is.

Against the background of the second dominant world order theory, namely the 'Clash of Civilisations' paradigm suggested by Samuel P. Huntington,⁷ the

² Robert O. Keohane, 'International Relations, Old and New', in Robert E. Goodin and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, eds, *A New Handbook of Political Science*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 462.

³ Fred Halliday, *Two Hours that Shook the World. September 11, 2001: Causes and Consequences*, London, Saqi Books, 2002, p. 31.

⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilisations?', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, 1993, pp. 22–49; Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*, London, Simon & Schuster, 1997. For an 'Islamicist's' critique of Huntington's ideas preceding September 11th, see Roy P. Mottahedeh, 'The Clash of Civilisations: An Islamicist's Critique', *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1995, pp. 1–26.

⁵ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York, Free Press, 1992.

⁶ David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, and Jonathan Perraton, *Global Transformations*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1999, p. 15.

⁷ In the aftermath of September 11th both Huntington and Fukuyama reiterated the centrality of their respective thesis for the future world order. See *Washington Post*, 16

second part of this article argues that the attack on the US, rather than being an incidence of inter-civilisational conflict, epitomised the ongoing clash among different constructions within political Islam. What is neglected by the portrayal of civilisations as monolithic blocks is both the scope of constitutional models, ranging from secular systems such as Turkey or Tunisia, to traditionalist monarchies such as Saudi Arabia, to modern syntheses such as Iran, and the range of contemporary discourse in the Middle East and elsewhere in the 'Muslim' world. Rather than being related to inter-civilisational conflict, the 'neo-fundamentalism' espoused by transnational networks such as al-Qaeda is first and foremost designed to destabilise the Arab regimes in the Middle East and derail reform processes in the 'Muslim' world and hence has to be discussed against the background of contemporary 'Muslim' politics. Here, 'neo-fundamentalism' refers to the emergence of a new category within extremist, political Islam, 'ideologically conservative but at times politically radical'.⁸ Interrelated with the globalisation of terror, that 'struggle within Islam' influences the future perils of world politics, and thus merits reflection.

Global Political Violence and the End of the 'End of History'

After the demise of Communism as the nemesis of the self-declared 'Free World' and the end of the bipolar world order, two dominant theories dominated normative discourse about the future order of world politics. The first of these was the euphoric thesis of the 'End of History' propounded by Francis Fukuyama; the second, the apocalyptic 'Clash of Civilisations' prophecy suggested by Samuel P. Huntington. With the triumph of liberal-capitalism as the only remaining legitimate ideology, Fukuyama argues, the liberation of humankind has been accomplished and the world will be encompassed by a liberal zone of peace. According to Fukuyama, history as we know it will be terminated by the global inhalation of the core values of 'Western' civilisation. Here, Fukuyama names economic development and the aspiration of individuals to maximise personal freedom as the two mechanisms determining the end of ideological competition, and hence the end of history.

For obvious reasons, the inherent idealism of Fukuyama's thesis is not consistent with the current climate of international politics. Contrary to the view that the triumph of 'Western' modernity ushers in an era of global liberalism as the inevitable path to the salvation of humankind, the forces underlying 11 September question the very legitimacy of the political, economic and cultural supremacy of the supposedly 'Western' values tied to the argument of Fukuyama. While the attack on the US and indeed the assault on the perceived manifestations of capitalism and military hegemony provide another example of the violent eruption of the volcano of anti-Western resentment, there is certainly an intellectual dimension underlying such action which merits attention. The history of terrorism tells us at least two lessons: first, that apart from isolated incidents committed out of revenge or 'psychological disturbance'⁹ by indivi-

(Footnote continued)

December 2001, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A34207-2001Dec12.html

⁸ Olivier Roy, 'Neo-fundamentalism', www.ssrc.org/Sept11/essays/roy_text_only.htm

⁹ Fred Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation. Religion and Politics in the Middle-East*, London and New York, I. B. Tauris, 1996, p. 36.

duals or groups, there are real issues beyond the reprehensible use of terror that cannot be ignored and, second, that contrary to its original meaning as a strategy to implement political order during the régime de la terreur of the French Revolution 'terrorism' has become a label attached to declared outsiders of society, either international or domestic, in order to legitimise, in most instances, action against the outside group.¹⁰ In the political climate since September 11th discussion of the issues underlying the attack on the US seems to be politically incorrect and is largely avoided. As a consequence, the current 'war on terrorism' is creating new fronts within states and between them, opening up new potentials for future conflict on a global scale. Without reflecting upon the motivation of terrorist networks, however, both the sources of their criminal behaviour and the strategies they employ remain unclear. While the means of terrorist organisations are reprehensible, discussing issues that motivate these groups might open up alternative modes of explaining the rationale behind their actions.

The underlying assumption of the theory of Fukuyama is a narrow definition of globalisation as unidirectional and driven solely by the twin forces of liberalism and economic integration. This paper has already mentioned the conventional definition of globalisation in social science denoting increasing linkages of human activities across regions and continents as a result of technological and social change.¹¹ Keohane and Nye define 'globalism' as a 'state of the world involving networks of interdependence at multicontinental distances, linked through flows of capital and goods, information and ideas, people and force, as well as environmentally and biologically relevant substances'.¹² When globalism is understood as multidirectional and occurring on different levels, as in those definitions, the global outreach of contemporary terrorism can itself be regarded as a factor in globalisation.¹³ In that vein, 'moving the battle into the heart of America', as proclaimed by Suleiman Abu Gaith,¹⁴ spokesman of bin-Laden, exemplifies the expansion of transnational networks such as al-Qaeda beyond the confines of regional and national boundaries. This is supported by the fact that a large number of al-Qaeda activists have lived, worked and studied in several countries all over the world, adapting to the different environments and taking advantage of modern technologies of communication, transportation and weaponry. Some of the activists linked to al-Qaeda are converts to Islam socialised in London or other major West European cities, and have similar middle-class backgrounds to 'urban' terrorists in other parts of the world.¹⁵ In other words, the globalisation of violence by networks such as al-Qaeda reveals the adverse effects of the supposedly exclusive mechanisms heralded by Fukuyama and others as the catalysts of global liberalism and capitalism.

¹⁰ Halliday, *Two Hours that Shook the World*, pp. 81–82.

¹¹ Held et al., p. 15.

¹² Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 3rd edn, New York, Addison Wesley Longman, 2001, p. 229.

¹³ Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, p. 237.

¹⁴ See the statement of Suleiman Abu Gaith of 9 October 2001, in *Financial Times*, 10 October 2001.

¹⁵ The social background of those al-Qaeda members is hence comparable to leftist movements such as the German Rote Armee Fraktion, the Italian Brigade Rosse, the Angry Brigade in Britain and the range of 'urban guerilla' movements in Central and South America that were especially active during the 1960s and 1970s. The aim of targeting urban centres is shared by the Aum Shinrikyo (Supreme Truth) religious sect in Japan, responsible for the unleashing of nerve gas in the Tokyo underground in March 1995 and the Oklahoma bombing by 'White Supremacists' in the United States in the same year.

September 11th put an abrupt end to such premature prophecies and certainly added a new, disturbing category to the phenomenon of globalisation itself.

To adopt the preceding argument means that September 11th defies the conventional understanding of the effects of globalisation. The global outreach of transnational terrorism adds a new dimension to globalism, while falsifying the unidirectional automatism that constitutes the lifeline of the 'End of History' thesis. The driving agents of globalisation are not simply reducible to the Bill Gateses and George Sorosés of this world, but also include criminal groupings travelling around the globe using English and Arabic and sharing a sense of belonging to a common cause with a universal ethos. While that new instance of globalism found its tragic epitome in the death of over 3,000 civilians in New York and at least the same number in Afghanistan, the purpose of the neo-fundamentalism espoused by transnational networks such as al-Qaeda provides a second category of controversy to be focused upon in the following section.

The Myth of the 'Clash of Civilisations'

In direct response to Fukuyama, Samuel P. Huntington cautioned against the euphoria underlying the 'End of History' thesis. Instead, Huntington painted the picture of a potential new world disorder in which competing civilisations struggle for the dominance of international politics. His main hypothesis is 'that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural [...] The clash of civilisation will dominate global politics.'¹⁶ According to that view, conflict along the cultural fault lines of 'Islam' and the 'West' epitomises the emerging 'West against the Rest'¹⁷ dichotomy, positing the worse case scenario for the equilibrium of future world politics. By externalising the significant 'other' as representation of an imagined enemy, the West against the rest dichotomy is not very different from the mental disposition behind the *dar al-Islam* (house of Islam, forces of good) *dar al-harb* (forces of evil) distinction espoused by both Arab nationalists and 'Islamic' fundamentalist movements. Both positions, Islam vs. infidels and West vs. the rest, are intended to enforce categories and draw strict boundaries between supposedly incompatible worldviews. In Edward Said's words,

primitive passions and sophisticated know-how converge in ways that give the lie to a fortified boundary not only between 'West' and 'Islam' but also between past and present, us and them ... A unilateral decision made to draw lines in the sand, to undertake crusades, to oppose their evil with our good, to extirpate terrorism and, in Paul Wolfowitz's nihilistic vocabulary, to end nations entirely, doesn't make the supposed entities any easier to see; rather, it speaks to how much simpler it is to make bellicose statements for the purpose of mobilising collective passions than to reflect, examine, sort out what it is we are dealing with in reality, the interconnectedness of innumerable lives, 'ours' as well as 'theirs'.¹⁸

In the current climate of cataclysmic transformations, the inherent essentialism of dichotomous world categories provides a ready-made affirmation of the

¹⁶ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations*, p. 22.

¹⁷ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations*, p. 41.

¹⁸ Edward W. Said, 'The Clash of Ignorance', *The Nation*, 22 October 2001, www.thenation.com/docPrint.mhtml?i=20011022&s=said

lowest common denominator in the domestic and international context, namely the sense of an inescapable standoff between 'Western' and 'Islamic' world-views. From the arrest of 'Muslim' activists in the US and Europe to the international war on terrorism, the issues concerned mostly relate to the people and states of the 'Western' and the ('Muslim') eastern hemispheres. Except for the most purblind, it seems, it should be evident that the theory of a West against the rest dichotomy, narrowed down to a conflict between the challenger civilisation 'Islam' and the 'West', found its manifestation in the attacks on the most prominent symbols of 'Western' capitalism and military power.¹⁹

The theory of Huntington, constructed as a meta-narrative for a new world order in the aftermath of the demise of the Soviet Union, continues to have a serious impact on the psychology of international politics. Among the few international relations theories that gained prominence both in academic and in decision-making circles, its provocative conclusions even inspired the emergence of a symbolic counter-approach in the form of the 'Dialogue among Civilisations' initiative, suggested by Iranian President Mohammad Khatami and adopted by the United Nations as the political motto of 2001. In his speech to the United Nations on 21 September 1998, Khatami countered the idea of civilisational conflict by stressing the importance of dialogue on the basis of universal norms:

Among the worthiest achievements of this century is the acceptance of the necessity and significance of dialogue and rejection of force, promotion of understanding ... and strengthening of the foundations of liberty, justice, and human rights ... If humanity at the threshold of the new century and millennium devotes all efforts to institutionalise dialogue, replacing hostility and confrontation with discourse and understanding, it would leave an invaluable legacy for the benefit of the future generations.²⁰

Apart from such rare occurrences of constructive engagement, the pervasive myth of an 'Islamic' threat continues to provide enough potential for polemical misuse, both among those in the 'West' who would like to castigate a religion stretching from North Africa to Southeast Asia into one supposedly homogeneous entity, and among 'Muslim' extremists who propagate the utopia of a single Muslim *umma* (community) destined to challenge the tenets of 'Western' civilisation. After September 11th, the Huntington thesis regained its prominence among politicians, including Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who pontificated about the 'supremacy of western values',²¹ or former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who in an article published in *The Guardian* equated Islamism with Bolshevism.²² In the spirit of the prophecy of Huntington, September 11th has been turned into proof that it is the 'Islamic menace' that undermines the security of 'Western' democracies and the very foundations of the capitalist world system.

¹⁹ By using the headline 'Why They Hate Us: The Roots of Islamic Rage and What We Can Do about It', the 15 October 2001 edition of *Newsweek* captured this mood accurately.

²⁰ President Mohammad Khatami's address at the UN General Assembly on 21 September 1998, *Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 10, nos 1–2, 1998, p. 132.

²¹ The statement of Berlusconi during a state visit to Germany on 26 September 2001 triggered widespread criticism by both the European Union and 'Islamic' states, prompting him to make a half-hearted apology for his ignorance about the various contributions of 'Islam' to human affairs.

²² Margaret Thatcher, 'Islamism Is the New Bolshevism', *The Guardian*, 12 February 2002, www.guardian.co.uk/bush/story/0,7369,648935,00.html

What is neglected by the portrayal of civilisations as supposedly homogeneous units is the complexity of intra-regional developments, which begets far more insights into the causes and consequences of September 11th than either Huntington or Fukuyama appreciates. Discussed against the context of forces pulling and pushing the direction of political Islam from within, the transnational terrorism employed by the members of al-Qaeda can be seen as an attempt to escalate the ongoing struggle between progressive Islam and extremist Islam on a global scale. The most violent exemplification of the propaganda by deed policy followed by anarchists from the end of the 19th century onwards, the strategy behind September 11th is aimed at radicalising public opinion in the various domestic contexts of the 'Muslim' world in order to attain political power. The outcome of this clash within civilisation—not only after September 11th—relates to the contemporary perils of international politics and thus requires further discussion.

The Context of September 11th: The Politics of 'Islam'

More than two decades after the success of the Iranian revolution brought political Islam to the forefront of international politics, the direction of fundamentalism in the Arab world and the non-Arab states of Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey is changing. Two interrelated issues merit analysis: first, the emergence of a new form of transnational and fundamentalist movements and second the modified challenges to the legitimacy of the nation-state and established 'Islamist' agendas evolving from these movements. In conjunction with the impact of a long-term crisis such as the conflict over Palestine and the colonial and Cold War legacies that have been discussed elsewhere,²³ those two developments add to the instability of the regions involved and provide the breeding ground for the emergence of terrorist organisations such as al-Qaeda.

'Islamism' denotes the politicisation of Islam by movements, operating mainly within the Middle East, aiming to implement religious principles in the realm of society, state and culture.²⁴ As opposed to 'fundamentalism', which urges passive adherence to literal reading of the Qu'ran, 'Islamism can embrace both "progressive" *ulema* and those urban intellectuals who believe Islamic tenets are compatible with such modern values as freedom and democracy.'²⁵

While the renaissance of 'Islam' as an all-encompassing political ideology can be traced back to the early 1920s, it was the triumph of the Iranian revolution of 1979 that for the first time created a modern Islamic state.²⁶ The causes of the resurgence of 'Islam' and the various forms and shapes it takes in the different national contexts are diverse and exceed the limits of this article. Suffice it to

²³ See among others John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1992; Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation*, pp. 36–41.

²⁴ Halliday, *Two Hours that Shook the World*, p. 43.

²⁵ Ali R. Abootalebi, 'Islam, Islamists and Democracy', *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1999, www.biu.ac.il/SOC/bsa/meria/journal/1999/issue1/jv3n1a2.html. The same distinction was used earlier by Robin Wright, 'Islam, Democracy and the West', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 3, 1992, pp. 131–45.

²⁶ See among others Roger Owen, *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle-East*, 2nd edn, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, p. 173; Halliday, *Two Hours that Shook the World*, p. 43.

keep in mind that the success of Islamism is closely linked to disillusionment with secular nationalism and may be traced back to the challenges of 'Western' modernity that confronted the societies of the Middle East from the beginning of the 20th century onwards. In domestic contexts, the authoritarian governments in 'Muslim' countries failed to secure public legitimacy and heavily relied upon repressive security apparatus to enforce their political power. In terms of international politics, the defeat of the Arab forces by Israel in 1967 discredited Arab nationalism and opened up the vacuum for Islamist agendas. Against this background and the widespread popular dissent with corruption, mismanagement and the inability of the ruling elite to resist perceived 'Western' political and cultural imperialism, Islamist movements successfully generated popular support for their respective socioeconomic and political programmes.

While Islamist movements differ with regard to their motives, they have in common the quest to synthesise modernity with the main tenets of the *shari'a* (Islamic law). In Turkey, where Islamism rose as a protest movement against the secularisation of the Turkish state espoused by Mustafa Kemal 'Atatürk' during the 1920s and 1930s and later in Iran as a reaction against the repressive policies of Reza Khan and his son Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi during the reign of the Pahlavi dynasty between 1925 and 1979, the main mass support for Islamic movements came from urban, well-educated youth with a secular background.

While 'Islamism' describes a broad narrative currently dominant in the Middle East and elsewhere, there is no such thing as a coherent 'Islamic' movement. The success of the Iranian revolution had very distinct features—from the charismatic leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to the history of opposition in Shia religious thought²⁷—and thus did not spread to other countries. While the Islamic Republic in its first decade of existence endeavoured to export its revolution (*sudur-e enqilab*) to other states with significant Shia populations, such as Bahrain, Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon, it failed to generate a mass movement that would seriously threaten the regimes in power.²⁸

Rather than representing a coherent political movement, Islamism is a product of specific national circumstances. As opposed to al-Qaeda, Hamas is not calling for a jihad against the 'West' and is limiting its activities to the

²⁷ The main tenet of Iranian Shi'ism is that the last in the line of the Twelve Imams, who the Shi'ites believe are the legitimate heirs of the Prophet Mohammad, went into hiding, and will return to establish the just rule of God on earth. The inherent mysticism of this belief in the occultation (*gheibat*) of the twelfth Imam is accompanied by a moral stress on the sufferings of Shi'ites at the hands of perceived unjust rulers, and upon the cult of the Shi'ite martyrs, Imam Ali and his sons, Imam Hassan and Imam Hossein. In particular, the powerful imagery of the martyrdom (*shahadat*) of Imam Hossein against superior forces has served the cause of popular mobilisation in modern Iran, both in the domestic context against foreign interference and authoritarianism and in perceived injustice in world politics. In this regard, Ayatollah Khomeini employed the *mostazafan*—*mostakbaran* dichotomy to refer to the fight of the 'oppressed' against the 'oppressors' both in the domestic context in order to mobilise the masses against the repressive regime of the Shah and in the international realm in order to confront perceived imperialism and political injustice ranging from Apartheid to the occupation of Palestine. For a discussion of the oppositional role of the 'Muslim' clergy in Iran, see among others Hamid Algar, 'The Oppositional Role of the Ulema in Twentieth Century Iran', in Nikki Keddie, ed., *Scholars, Saints and Sufis*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1972, or Shahrough Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran*, Albany, State University of New York, 1980.

²⁸ See also Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, London, I. B. Tauris, 1994, pp. 183–193.

occupied territories and Israel. The Refah party (now Fazilet) of Necmettin Erbakan is inspired by Ottoman legacies and intends to address the effects of Kemalism on the constitution of Turkey, rather than to create an Islamic state. The Shia opposition inside and outside of Iraq works closely together with nationalist movements in the country. The Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) in Algeria portrays itself as the heir of the anti-colonialist fight against colonial occupation, and has had only marginal success in Morocco and Tunisia.²⁹ While these organisations act within the limits and constraints of established nation-state institutions and under the banner of a well-known political and social agenda, loose networks such as al-Qaeda are divorced from any regulatory context. Consequently, they rely on increasing violence in order to advance their political aspirations. This violence is not at all restricted to US institutions. Employing a radical interpretation of the Wahhabi school of Islamic thought, the ascendancy of the Taliban–al-Qaeda coalition in Afghanistan led also to an increasing anti-Shia bias in the region. As a result, sectarian violence led to the murder of dozens of Shi'ites in Pakistan, damaging relations between Sunni Pakistan and Shia Iran. In Afghanistan, the Taliban assassinated Iranian diplomats after capturing the northern town of Mazar-i Sharif in August 1998, further escalating anti-Shia sentiments and worsening the situation of the Hazara minority in the country.³⁰

A quick look at the arrested and killed members of the Taliban–al-Qaeda coalition show that the militants are recruited mainly among radicalised Sunnis in Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Arab world and Chechnya and among uprooted and disillusioned youths with secular backgrounds in 'Western', mainly Western European circles. The composition of the coalition is thus fundamentally different from Islamist organisations, which are mostly rooted within the confines of the nation-state and act within a specific political context. Even radical groups such as Hamas or Islamic Jihad adapt to the regulations of the nation-state and regional politics. For the Taliban–al-Qaeda coalition, however, Afghanistan had been reduced to the status of an emirate, rather than a state, without an official capital and without a definition of Afghan nationhood.³¹ Mollah Omar, a village preacher with no religious credentials among the *ulema* (Muslim clergy), did not take up a position as head of state but declared himself *Amir al-Mu'minin* (commander of the faithful), staying in Kandahar rather than caring to travel to the Afghan capital Kabul.

As a transnational force, the presence of networks such as al-Qaeda threatens the very legitimacy of the nation-state. The repeated call of the al-Qaeda leadership to 'rise and defend the holy lands' and to 'remove evil from

²⁹ Olivier Roy, 'Neo-fundamentalism', www.ssrc.org/Sept11/essays/roy_text_only.htm. Both the Refah Party in Turkey and the FIS in Algeria managed to gain power by winning elections but have been ousted by political—military opponents, while Hamas, at least officially, has not yet dictated *mainstream* Palestinian politics.

³⁰ Fred Halliday, 'Nervous Tehran Has a Wider Role to Play', *The Guardian*, 21 October 2001, www.observer.co.uk/islam/story/0,1442,577958,00.html

³¹ Olivier Roy, 'Neo-fundamentalism', www.ssrc.org/Sept11/essays/roy_text_only.htm

the Peninsula of Mohammad³² during the US American military offensive against the Taliban in Afghanistan, for instance, was implicitly designed to question the sovereignty of the Saudi state. Osama bin Laden did expect that the US would retaliate in full force. His rationale for taking that chance was that he anticipated a mass movement among Muslims, mainly in the Arab world, Afghanistan and Pakistan, a calculation that was as wrong as Saddam Hussein's speculation about 'Muslim' support against the Allied forces during the second Persian Gulf War.

The most apparent factor distinguishing movements such as al-Qaeda or the Taliban from Islamist movements is the lack of a social, political, economic, let alone intellectual agenda. In the Iranian/Shia context Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, along with other pioneers of Shia political thought such as Ayatollah Hassan Shariatmadari, Ayatollah Baqer al-Sadr and Ali Shariati, addressed a wide range of social interaction, from the individual to the nation-state, and elaborated their respective agendas in relation to acknowledged facts of modernity, while endeavouring to embed their constructs in an 'Islamic' discourse. The same applies to other 'Islamic' thinkers such as Hassan Al-Ban'na and Abul A'la Mawdudi, to name but two.³³ The political and social movements that were enhanced by the propagated 'Islamic' resurgence and refer to the manifestos of these thinkers had and have legitimate concerns with regard to domestic and international issues. The reason why even the most radical of these movements have not endorsed bin-Laden's struggle against the 'West,' is that both the Taliban and al-Qaeda lack any kind of economic, social and intellectual agenda and that unresolved concerns, ranging from domestic reform to the occupation of Palestine, would be delegitimised by any association with September 11th.

The Implications of September 11th for World Politics

The causes and consequences of September 11th are much more diverse than the theories of Huntington and Fukuyama can comprehend. The preceding discussion about the struggle for Islam as the dominant narrative of contemporary 'Muslim' politics defies a portrayal of civilisations as monolithic polities. In this regard, the rationale behind the terrorist attacks against the US has been mainly to radicalise public opinion in 'Muslim' countries. Certainly, one might contend that bin-Laden had calculated that the US would retaliate and expected that the demagogy of a jihad against the West would unite significant segments of the Arab, Pakistani and Afghan populations behind the Taliban-al-Qaeda coalition, silencing moderate voices and threatening the stability of collaborating states such as Saudi Arabia or Pakistan. September 11th hence may be regarded as a new incident of globalisation bringing the 'clash within Islam' to the global stage. Neither a narrow vision of the universal triumph of capitalism and liberalism nor the myth of an Islamic colossus aimed at destroying the tenets of 'Western' civilisation explains the implications of September 11th for global politics.

³² As requested by Osama bin Laden during his speech broadcasted on al-Jazira television on 7 October 2001, and published on 8 October 2001 in the *International Herald Tribune*.

³³ Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, pp. 35–39.

What then are the likely effects of September 11th on world politics? Certainly, it is too early to answer that question, and what follows is certainly not to be understood as some kind of deterministic prediction. Instead, the lines below will characterise patterns, building upon the preceding analysis about the globalisation of violence and the struggle for Islam. Two dominant factors merit further attention. First, the globalisation of violence typified by the events on September 11th altered the traditional view of security and geographical barriers. The success of 'bringing the battle into the heart of America', as proclaimed by bin-Laden, carried out by the network of a non-state actor, motivated by a common universal cause, without established battle lines and territorial boundaries, blurs the traditional security calculus with regard to physical invulnerability due to geographic barriers. That new dimension of globalisation means that states such as the US which were traditionally geographically separated from the devastation in other parts of the world suddenly find themselves in a situation where the meaning of geographical barriers and the security assumption tied to it have become obsolete. While the threat from thermonuclear war, which equally blurred the barriers of geographical space, was calculable during the Cold War, the transnational terrorism of the kind of September 11th is not.

The second factor is related to the first and is linked to the argument about the global outreach of the struggle for 'Islam'. The sense of security interdependence that has been generated by the attacks on the United States and the underlying issues relating to 'Muslim' politics suddenly pushed the isolationist policies of the Bush administration towards military and diplomatic engagements in regions it had previously intended to abandon. Initially, the ability of the United States to orchestrate an international response has been greatly enhanced by the powerful 'international coalition against terrorism' narrative. Even states that have been known to challenge US foreign policy, such as Syria, Libya and Iran, were quick to condemn the events of September 11th and used their diplomatic influence to stabilise the situation in Afghanistan. Iran, together with Russia the main contributor to the Northern Alliance for the past seven years, even offered search and rescue missions for downed US pilots on Iranian territory, and actively contributed to the establishment of the Afghan interim government of Hamid Karzai.³⁴

From the repeated announcement of decision makers in Europe and the United States that the war on terrorism is not a war against 'Islam' to the deepened engagement of the European Union with states such as Iran that until recently had represented the archetypal 'Muslim' polity in 'Western' imagery, the various challenges of political Islam appear to dominate the agenda of world politics. Here, there is no contradiction to the argument about the struggle within Islam and the inherent diversity of the 'Muslim' world. It is simply inaccurate to argue that there exists some kind of 'Islamic' menace, first because there is no 'Muslim' consensus on how to deal with the 'West' (and vice versa) and second because 'Islamic' states are much more concerned with domestic crisis than international confrontation. In the context of 'Muslim' politics, the use and misuse of 'Islam' as a political instrument, however, constitutes an ideological

³⁴ Daniel Brumberg, 'End of a Brief Affair? The United States and Iran', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, Policy Brief, 14 March 2002.

determination, both in domestic and in systemic settings, and reached global dimensions after September 11th. That politicisation of 'Islam' has proven to provide enough potentiality to generate mass movements, providing a powerful instrument ready to be utilised by states, transnational networks or individuals. The struggle to dominate 'Muslim' politics, thus, will remain a dominant factor in international politics and its outcome will certainly have an impact on the order of future world politics.

As opposed to Huntington's prescription that the US should refrain from meddling in the affairs of 'alien civilisations', the current foreign policy restructuring of the Bush administration hints towards more engagement on the international level than one would have anticipated before September 11th. The inherent morality of the struggle against terrorism, enhanced by the emotionally charged atmosphere in the aftermath of September 11th, has given the United States the mandate to forge a fragile alliance that allowed a military attack on Afghanistan without systematic opposition by other states. The legitimising instrumentality of this war on terrorism will remain a powerful force, not only on the systemic level of international politics but also in the various domestic contexts.³⁵

Conclusions: Foreign Policy Lessons and Theoretical Ramifications

Against the background of the world order theories of Fukuyama and Huntington this article has argued that the causes and consequences of September 11th can be explained in terms neither of the end of history nor of a clash among civilisations. Two interrelated arguments have been discussed: first, September 11th can be characterised as one incident of globalisation, questioning the assumption that we can attribute a unidirectional automatism to global affairs, and, second, that the attack on the United States can be related to the ongoing struggle between different constructs of political Islam. In order to appreciate the perils and idiosyncrasies of that changed climate of interaction, drawing lines between supposedly different entities might provide policy guidelines and legitimise unilateral military campaigns, it does not, however, appreciate the complex interconnectedness of contemporary world politics. These issues are, of course, by no means exclusive. Adopting them as alternative causes and consequences for September 11th, however, yields practical and theoretical implications that were previously ignored.

In regard to practical ramifications, the globalisation of political violence has altered the traditional understanding of security threats. After September 11th, globalisation means that the barriers of geographical space and the security associated with them are further blurred. While the likelihood of thermonuclear confrontation during the Cold War and the symmetry of a bipolar world order provided a calculable threat, transnational networks such as al-Qaeda strike out of nowhere, and do not react towards deterrence or any form of missile defence system for that matter. The global reach of that political violence links the security of the United States to the ongoing struggle within 'Islam', and hence requires international and indeed multilateral resolve to be managed.

³⁵ The label 'war on terrorism' hence provides enough potentiality to be employed in various contexts, from the continuing dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir to

After September 11th the Bush administration for a short period abandoned the unilateralist policies that had previously led the US to opt out of international treaties such as the Kyoto protocol against global warming.³⁶ By forging an international alliance via the UN Security Council³⁷ and implementing careful diplomacy with regard to the war against Afghanistan, the US successfully managed to minimise the opposition to the use of military force. Now that the Taliban movement in Afghanistan appears to be defeated, however, the rhetoric of the Bush administration regarding the future of the war on terrorism has turned back to the tenor of unilateralism, to the detriment of both the diplomatic initiatives of the European Union and future stability in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

The issues underlying what Halliday calls the 'Greater West Asian Crisis',³⁸ ranging from the legacies of colonialism and the Cold War to the quest for Palestinian statehood, Kashmir and Afghanistan, require multilateral resolve on the basis of international norms and against the background of genuine dialogue and engagement. This is certainly not some remote utopia. The historical fact that the United Nations evolved out of the mayhem of the Second World War proves that international crisis can generate international cooperation. My discussion of the politics pulling and pushing the 'Islamic' world from within should have conveyed the message that the forces behind September 11th are a threat to universal values transcending both the 'Muslim' world and the 'West'. An appreciation of that interconnectedness provides the common denominator that could generate stronger multilateral cooperation on a global scale. If boundaries, in terms of national, civilisational or other imagined constructs, are enforced, however, the vast majority of people might get alienated from essentially universal principles, enforcing the dangerous disposition that the future world order is somehow determined by irrefutable self-fulfilling prophecies.³⁹

In theoretical terms the globalisation of political violence and security interdependence challenge traditional realist views of the roles of states in international relations. In an essay published in the aftermath of September 11th, Keohane argues that

Most problematic are the assumptions in international relations theory about the roles played by states. There has been too much 'international relations,' and too little 'world politics,' not only in work on security but also in much work on

(Footnote continued)

the escalating violence between Israelis and Palestinians and the continued military campaigns of Russia against Chechnya, and Turkey against Islamist and Kurdish leftist opposition forces. Taking this together with the fact that since September 11th the US has embarked upon a major military operation in Afghanistan and minor, not necessarily related, operations in various regions of the world (Georgia, Colombia, Philippines), one might well conclude that the war on terrorism is indeed a dominant current in international politics since September 11th.

³⁶ Robert O. Keohane, 'The Globalization of Violence, Theories of World Politics and "The Liberalism of Fear"', www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/keohane.htm

³⁷ Security Council Resolution 1373 passed on 28 September 2001 used the mandatory provisions of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter to require all states to deny safe haven 'both to terrorists' and to those who 'provide safe haven' to terrorists. Resolution 1373 also required states to prevent potential terrorists from using their territories, and to 'prevent and suppress the financing of terrorist acts'.

³⁸ Halliday, *Two Hours that Shook the World*, p. 38.

³⁹ The 'Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act' which passed unanimously (97.0) in the US American Senate on 18 April 2002, further constraining the entry of citizens of so called 'state sponsors of terrorism' into the US is certainly to be considered a step into the wrong direction.

international institutions. States no longer have a monopoly on the means of mass destruction: more people died in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon than in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. Indeed, it would be salutary for us to change the name of our field, from 'international relations' to 'world politics.' The language of 'international' relations enables us to slip back into state-centric assumptions too easily.⁴⁰

If one were to take the argument of Keohane one step further and delve deeper into international relations theory, the 'states systemic project', originally pioneered by Kenneth Waltz,⁴¹ requires modification in the direction of what constructivists refer to as the appreciation of agency in world politics.⁴² While the war on terrorism reinforced the centrality of states to the current conflict, the presence of non-state actors, either violent, as in the case of al-Qaeda, or non-violent, as in the case of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), multinational companies, inter-governmental organisations (IGOs) and so forth, modifies the role of states in world politics. Like states, all of these group actors have their specific interests, defined in terms of their constructed identities. In the case of many NGOs, interest is defined in terms of the enhancement of environmental standards, health services, third world debt relief and so forth. At the other, darker end of the spectrum, terrorist organisations define interest in terms of political power, chaos, violence, media coverage and so on. As much as globalisation cannot be solely referred to in terms of economic integration, the modified challenges to the state in world politics cannot be merely defined in terms of orthodox concepts. Without the inclusion of new categories in the repertoire of international relations theory, these new nuances of world politics remain unaccounted for, and will certainly further question the practical utility of some of the contemporary debates occurring within the discipline.

⁴⁰ Robert O. Keohane, 'The Globalization of Violence, Theories of World Politics and "The Liberalism of Fear"', www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/keohane.htm

⁴¹ Waltz argues, 'So long as the major states are the major actors, the structure of international politics is defined in terms of them. That theoretical statement is of course borne out in practice. States set the scene in which they, along with non-state actors, stage their dramas or carry on their humdrum affairs ... When the crunch comes, states remake the rules by which other actors operate'; Kenneth N. Waltz, 'Political Structures', in Robert O. Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and Its Critics*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1986, p. 89. See also Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1959; Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1979.

⁴² For a constructivist version of the state-systemic project see Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Copyright of Cambridge Review of International Affairs is the property of Carfax Publishing Company and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.