



GLOBALIZATION AND GEOPOLITICS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Old Games, New Rules

Anoushiravan Ehteshami



“Anoushiravan Ehteshami combines the rich contextual knowledge of an area specialist with a masterful grasp of the rapidly changing dynamics of international politics. The result is an indispensable study of the impact of globalization on the geopolitics of the Middle East. This book will be welcomed as a major addition by specialists on the region, but Ehteshami’s lucid style also makes it an accessible—indeed, inviting—introduction for non-specialists. Hopefully, it will garner the attention of policy-makers as well.”

Ian Shapiro, Sterling Professor of Political Science at Yale University and author of ‘Containment: Rebuilding a Strategy against Global Terror’

“This useful survey of the dilemmas that confront the vast and complex region between Morocco and Central Asia in this era of rapid and worldwide change—and of the corresponding opportunities and challenges that the region itself represents for the world as a whole—should be useful for both beginning students and long-time observers of the Middle East.”

Lisa Anderson, Dean of the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University

“Anoushiravan Ehteshami brings together the disciplinary focus of the social scientist and the expertise of the Middle Eastern specialist to provide a uniquely area-specific study of globalization. Thoroughly informed and always lucid, this book examines globalization’s impact on perhaps the most critical region of the world, and convincingly argues that geopolitics can explain both the uncertain unfolding of and resistance to wider changes in the local context. It powerfully demonstrates that the interdependence and transnationalism of the Middle East are dependent on strategic events such as the war on terror and the invasion of Iraq – a perspective of immense analytical and policy significance.”

James Piscatori, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, University of Oxford

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Globalization and Geopolitics in the Middle East

This book explores the impact of globalization in the greater Middle East – including North Africa – in the context of the powerful geopolitical forces at work in shaping the region today. Discussion of globalization has often neglected to consider its impact on the Middle East. However, despite the relative lack of foreign direct investment, and the dysfunctional state of trade and regional co-operation, this book shows that globalization has had an impact on the Middle East, although its character and implications have been profoundly different from other regions such as East Asia. It demonstrates that, unlike in other regions, geopolitics has been a critical factor in driving globalization in the Middle East. It argues that whereas elsewhere globalization has opened up the economy, society, culture and attitudes to the environment, in the Middle East it has had the opposite effect, with poor state formation, little inter-regional trade, foreign and inter-regional investment, and reassertion of traditional identities. The author also explores the many dimensions and challenges of the region's being able to integrate fully into the globalized system. Overall, this book provides a much needed assessment of the impact of globalization on the politics, economies and social environment of the greater Middle East, in the context of the region's position as the central site of global geopolitical competition into the twenty-first century.

Anoushiravan Ehteshami is Professor of International Relations and Head of the School of Government and International Affairs at Durham University, UK. He is also a Fellow of the World Economic Forum. He was Vice-President of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) from 2000–03. He is the author of numerous books and articles on politics, international relations, strategic studies and political economy of the Middle East.

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Preface

This book was initially conceived as an introductory text on the globalization debate in the Middle East (which, for my purposes, also includes North Africa), but the work soon acquired the dimensions of a major research monograph on the impact and consequences of globalization on this highly dynamic and relatively unstable region. In its original form, it was to fill an obvious gap in the literature on globalization and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It was clear to me that much of the commentary, research and even speculation about globalization and its regional (geopolitical) aspects in the 1990s either inadvertently, or quite deliberately, chose to bypass the Middle East. Second, when MENA-related observations were made, these tended to be at the economic level, seemingly bereft of the historical, political, socio-economic and geopolitical context of the region. By its exclusion from debate and analysis, it seemed, the region's 'exceptionalism' was being proved. There existed, therefore, a real need for a comprehensive analytical text on the phenomenon of globalization and its multifaceted dimensions in what is today being referred to as the greater Middle East (GME).

The mission was twofold. First, to attempt to bridge the ever-widening gap between 'area studies' and the social science disciplines of international relations and political economy, and also to contextualize the multi-faceted debate about globalization as a global force in and around the Middle East, which is a strategically significant but vulnerable subsystem of the international system. The second task was to try and illustrate the unique characteristics of the region in the light of the unitary global force we now call globalization. Operationally, in the debates about globalization, regionalization has been presented as more-or-less its Siamese twin. The rapid integration and expansion of the European Union, the strengthening of the North American Free Trade Area, NAFTA's South American equivalent, and even the emergence of a Pacific Rim Forum have been explained in terms of the consolidation of regions in response to the globalization of the world economy and its transformation into a single system. But two regions of the international system – sub-Saharan Africa and the GME – have not fitted the analytical mould very easily. For me, while the African case is interesting and reflective of many of the arguments made in this book, for geostrategic reasons an exploration of the MENA case is even more enriching. The GME is, in geostrategic terms, at the heart of the international system, and part and parcel of one of its most dynamic and fast-changing components. As will be shown, the GME's place in Eurasia gives this region a huge weight in determining the fate and direction of change in this vast continental landmass.

The other major assumption made about globalization is its linear penetration across the globe. Its universality seems to be taken for granted, and debates focus on the nature of responses to it. In the GME, however, one is all too aware of the very real geopolitical, geocultural and even geo-economic tensions that correspond to the reach of globalization. While globalization, in terms of information and communication technologies and rapidity of movement, is readily observable, the causes of resistance to the general

globalization of the region remain understudied. In the GME, for example, foreign direct investment remains very small, and regional co-operation and trade in a dysfunctional state. This is the case despite the fact that some of the region's economies – notably the region's hydrocarbon exporters – have been vertically integrated into the world economy for decades. So it is possible to argue that globalization has not taken root. Furthermore, the point has to be made that geopolitical conditions do have a direct impact on responses to globalization. It is ironic that while, conceptually, globalization throws up geopolitics as a variable, so much of the debate about the former conveniently overlooks the impact the latter could have on the operationalization of globalization. In the GME, it will be argued here, geopolitics is a major determining factor.

Indeed, geopolitics struck with a vengeance – as I started writing this book, the size of the task ahead of me was inflated by the intensity of events in the region. Yet the delay has been useful, for it gave me time to build on the (albeit still few) exceptional studies on the subject that have now appeared. But time elasticity also enabled me to develop a longer-term view of the debates, and helped me in broadening my remit to also take account of the consequences of the more recent significant strategic developments affecting the region.

The book analyses the impact of globalization in the geopolitical context of the region – on the politics, economies and social environment of the Muslim-dominated MENA arena. But it does this in the context of the shifting strategic map of the region, and therefore looks at globalization's impact through the lens of geopolitics. The impact of the MENA-related events beyond the region on the Middle East itself cannot be underestimated either; following the devastating 9/11/2001 terrorist attacks on American soil it is impossible to talk about the post-Cold War geopolitics of the region in isolation from the international system. That single event, and its dramatic regional and global consequences, has returned the region into the centre of world politics, where I believe it is likely to remain for much of the twenty-first century. Indeed, just as it was in the twentieth century – with oil putting the Middle East at the heart of international politics – today oil and the threats to its safe exploration and passage, and the threat of international terrorism sustained by authoritarian regimes and undemocratic societies, form the other main planks of concern, which also include proliferation, social unsustainability, rapid population growth, and the march of political Islam. The key difference from the past, though, is that the world has become a far more integrated place, and power too diffuse for any single actor to try and 'manage', or even contain, the Middle East's many complexities. Interdependence, along with transnationalization of the network of states and social communities, has turned the relationship between the GME and the rest of the system into a major security complex. In the meantime, globalization has continued to erode the certainties of life for the average MENA citizen without necessarily providing the benefits of integration. For this area, in addition to uncertainties of globalization itself, the geopolitical fall-out from 9/11 will have to be added to any serious study. The effects and vagaries of globalization must be evaluated with an eye on the geopolitical consequences of 9/11 and the deeply destabilizing war on terror.

This book owes much to the debates I have had the privilege of conducting with prominent thinkers, senior corporate and government policy leaders and advisors on the fringes of the World Economic Forum summits and meetings. They have collectively provided the international fabric for my thoughts, and many of them have played an

active part in shaping my ideas. Colleagues in Durham and those elsewhere in the UK research community (Exeter, Lancaster, Leeds, London, Oxford, Sheffield, St Andrews), in addition to those from the USA, Finland, Germany and France, have been unselfishly supportive and helpful throughout. The warmth and generosity of a large number of wonderful friends and colleagues in the region itself – from Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia, to Turkey, the UAE and Saudi Arabia – actually made writing the book a pleasant experience. Colleagues from, or based in, these countries have played a critical role in crystallizing my thoughts on the relationship between geopolitics and globalization. The end of this book is perhaps the first stage of this ongoing dialogue.

In addition, I owe a big debt of gratitude to a whole host of students in my Master's classes, who over the years have helped me to fine-tune many of the themes with which I have grappled in this book. Their collective effectiveness as a sounding board cannot be exaggerated. To all the students who have walked through the doors of my classes in the past decade or more, I express my deepest thanks. To my research students, whose research often had a 'globalist' dimension, I also say thank you! They, over 20 of them so far, have contributed greatly in keeping me intellectually fresh and mentally alert. This book owes much to their challenging work and intellectual enquiries. While none of the above share any of the shortcomings the reader may find in the book's analysis – that is entirely my responsibility – they have been partners in revealing insights that the reader may find interesting.

Last, but not least, I am indebted to my wife, Emma, for supporting me in every stage of this undertaking. I dedicate this book to her, as much as to my two little boys, Ardeshir and Kasra, who have brought so much joy to us. They will never know how secretly grateful I have been for the sleepless nights that they kindly passed my way in their attempts to keep my writing programme on schedule. My sister, Nadereh, and my niece, Noosha, also need a special mention for being there for me at the crucial final stages of this book. To them, and all my colleagues who have helped my intellectual development over the years, I convey my deepest gratitude!

Anoush Ehteshami
Durham,
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Introduction

Globalization and Geopolitics in the Middle East

The world economy is composed of its constituent producer, consumer, trader, financial, national, regional, local, sectoral, enterprise and individual parts; but like the proverbial whole, it is more than the sum of its parts. Any of its parts may be affected by others and by what is going on in the whole. To understand what is going on ... it is essential not to lose sight of the forest for looking at the trees. For the forest has a life of its own – growth, evolution, decay – beyond that of its constituent trees. Moreover, the development of the forest – through the interaction of the individual trees with each other and the forest as well as with their physical environment – determines more in the life of each tree than its life cycle affects the whole forest.

Andre Gunder Frank, 'East–West–South Relations in the World Economy', in Kofi Buenor Hadjor (ed.) *New Perspectives in North–South Dialogue: Essays in Honour of Olof Palme* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988).

The Debate

To speak about globalization in the greater Middle East (GME) immediately opens up the debate about the context and the very nature of social and political organization in the Muslim world. Globalization is not the only prime mover here, and the much-neglected geopolitical context needs to be understood if emerging trends and major changes taking place in the region are to be properly understood.¹ This study aims to place globalization in a geopolitical frame of analysis, arguing that the realities of the latter help shape the globalizing forces now bombarding this region. By geopolitics, it understands that 'nations or states are engaged in a perpetual struggle for life, the key to which is control over "spaces" into which the earth is divided. Development of these "spaces" is subject to "laws" which can be derived from the study of geography and history and successfully applied to foreign policy'.² Once such critical space with well developed and complex laws is the region known as the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and the wider geographical area to its east, which today forms the 'greater' Middle East. On the Middle East space and its laws, Carl Brown produced a pioneering study, which has informed the debate about the international politics of the Middle East to this day.³ In it he showed that the apparently confused state of international politics of the Middle East could be reduced to a discernible pattern – hence the 'old rules, dangerous game' of his subtitle. For me,

though, the current situation could be better captured by the term ‘old games, new rules’. Some of the old games, or even old rules, are of course still to be found in the international politics of the region, but for a fuller picture political economy, as part of the new rules, cannot be ignored.

This study therefore gives credit to the importance of political economy in shaping the modern Middle East. In doing this, it seeks to undertake a concurrent assessment of the key junctions of the encounters between globalization and this strategically significant region, notably in the broad realms of economics, politics and culture. The international politics of this area will provide the context for the impact that globalization could be having on regional politics, and on the relationship of the GME with the rest of the world. In this book I rapidly move from the general to the particular – after presenting an analysis of the geopolitical and geostrategic realities shaping the region, I follow the broad debates about globalization to locate this analysis in a regional framework, taking stock of the broader geopolitical environment in which the Middle East states operate, their neighbouring regions, and the huge role the USA plays in shaping the region’s many pressing agendas. I begin by laying the foundations, and asking what the concept of globalization actually means – at least to me. Then I explore how its paraphernalia and various dimensions affect the GME region.

There is real fear of globalization in this part of the world, and it is seen as a threatening force in many quarters.⁴ The problem lies in the fact that, while MENA regimes of all ideological persuasions have accepted the principle of economic liberalization and the need for adoption of World Trade Organization standards, few have been prepared to absorb the consequences of economic globalization for their countries’ socio-economic fabric. With weak economic systems and crumbling infrastructure, it is not surprising that several MENA regimes object to the unbridled economic force of globalization. Globalization, after all, would invite foreign investment, competition and transparency in economic relations. But, at the same time, it could also challenge the existing clientelist, corporatist and often authoritarian structures of the ruling systems, the region’s rentier socio-economic relationships, its subsidy-driven distribution systems, and the ‘coupon-clipping’ capitalist enterprises of most Middle East economies, in which profit from speculation more often than not takes precedence over profit from production.

The concerns of all less-developed countries about economic globalization are, of course, headed by fears of loss of control, which in political economy terms can translate into domination by the large transnational corporations, and loss of economic sovereignty and control over economic planning and cycles. Many of these fears are well founded, given the interdependencies that already exist between separate economic units (states and corporations) and the level of penetration of foreign capital in the most vibrant economic regions of the world. Economic globalization thus indicates ‘not only flows of finance, capital investment, technology and labour, but also an expanding web of transnational regulatory institutions ... [whose] autonomy from national governmental control has increased ... Individual nation-states, in this sense, are confronted not only by transnational economic power, but also, and in large measure, by transnational regulatory institutions’.⁵ The combination of economic penetration and imposition of international regulatory regimes on the ground pose unyielding challenges to the authority, if not the autonomy, of the MENA state, particularly where the political elite finds itself in charge of the national economy as well.

The debate about the erosion of the territorial state, in which the degree of state control over the economic process has been hotly contested for some time, is symptomatic of the perceived nature of the threat posed by globalization. In no other developing region, I would argue, is sovereignty (economic, political and cultural) more fervently defended than in the Middle East, which again raises deep suspicions in this part of the world about the corrosive impact of globalization on Muslim societies. At such junctions, the forces of globalization encounter their geopolitical counterparts. Holton has noted that challenges to the national integrity of a people as the cornerstone of a state immediately puts the spotlight on questions of cultural identity.⁶ In the Muslim Middle East, which has a unique and historically distinct cultural make-up, compared with many other regions, globalization's penetration means that the challenge is felt more profoundly at state level than elsewhere.

'Islamic nationalism', even in its most militant form, could therefore be seen as a direct response to this side-effect of economic globalization. Richard Falk's observation that where the state becomes subordinated to 'the logic of global capital, many people [react] by re-emphasising their traditional identities, including that of religion' is of direct relevance to the Middle East, where culture and religion, or political economy and religion, are never too far apart.⁷ In this setting, a de-territorialization of politics and culture can, under certain circumstances, be seen as enhancing the Arabist/ Islamist tendencies of most of its peoples in ways that the 1960s generation of Arab nationalists failed to advance. Subordination of the Muslim state to global capitalist forces can, on the other hand, also trigger a sense of rootlessness and isolation that could only be comforted through resistance and an indulgence in tradition.

The universalism of globalization, ironically, at the MENA regional level breeds parochialism and entrenchment of the forces of 'tradition'. In a dialectical process, at the same time it also breeds universalism of Islam itself. The 'Islamic' response, in turn, reinforces the perception of Middle East 'exceptionalism' – its uniqueness. Although religious-based political responses have been recorded elsewhere in the developing world,⁸ it is in the Middle East that the combination of the political economy of rentierism and religion produce a volatile and unpredictable mix.

Unique the region may be, but its exceptional status is tested in its inability to manage the challenges posed by globalization. As Hinnebusch notes, Middle East responses to globalization should be seen as 'a function of a changing interaction between the systemic (inter-state) and state (domestic) levels'.⁹ At this level, the region faces seemingly insurmountable challenges. In other words, it is in the exploration of the interaction between the inter-state and domestic levels that we understand better the nature of state responses to globalization. The state itself, though, can only be understood within its own geopolitical and historical setting. As Halliday has observed, it is not always the future of the Middle East, 'but its past, that ... poses the greatest challenge'.¹⁰

Furthermore, while global capital would probably appreciate the more open and competitive labour relations that the resultant fracturing of social systems brings, the Muslim peoples, with their tightly knit social relations, would find the prospect of a co-opted state so threatening as to take refuge in the very spaces that come to confront globalization. This is the paradox of our time with regard to the cultural impact of

globalization on Muslim states of the GME: any rapid opening up to the West, in cultural, political and economic terms, can ignite an Islamist backlash and, under certain circumstances, force a reversal.

But the remarkable fact is that the MENA region is generating strong politico-cultural responses to globalization when it is actually the least exposed of regional systems in terms of foreign direct investment and international trade. At the same time, its hydrocarbon exports are consumed worldwide, and it imports everything from ideas, to food, science, technology and know-how, to tools, cars, shoes and clothing. Even many of the handicrafts it sells as its own, in its local bazaars, are made elsewhere. The region is not by any means a backwater. It is not a global financial or industrial hub, certainly, and where financial and services hotspots do exist they are located in Dubai, Manama, Doha, and a handful of other relatively small Gulf Arab cities – but nor is it closed off from the rest of the world.

Could its relative economic autocracy be feeding its rejectionist sentiments, or is the state deliberately taking up the cause of culture as its shield – its *pardah*, veil – against globalization? Is culture a barrier to further economic integration, or a handy tool in the struggle for defence of national rights and core identities? Are the costs seen to outweigh the benefits of an open-door policy, even in the absence of other alternatives? If this were to be the case, could we then argue that the defence of the nation-state is actually little more than an instrumental element of the mercantilist instinct of MENA elites? Finally, how does this apparent resistance fare in the face of growing regionalization of the world economy, and the push by some MENA states for the deepening of regional relations (in terms of inter-MENA trade, investment and labour mobility) as a response to the internationalization of economic processes that globalization brings? These questions must be addressed, once we have located the region historically and strategically.

Globalization in History

In its simplest form, globalization suggests interdependence and inter-regional connection. Such interdependencies have a particular resonance in the MENA region. In geopolitical terms, this region has been an open regional system for generations, interactive with regard to its pre-modern social organizations, and highly extrovert as far as its pre-Islamic and Islamic empires are concerned. Its expansive reach and cosmopolitan nature in earlier times have been underlined by the presence of the profitable trade highway across Asia – the famous Silk Road – and the prosperity of such substantial urban centres as Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Saba, Samarqand, Cordoba, and Granada. Even before the emergence of the Silk Road and the cities that it nurtured, Alexandria in Egypt had established itself as the most cosmopolitan and open city in the world, where Egyptians traded exotic products from Arabia and Asia with their northern Mediterranean counterparts. Alexandria was also an important seat of learning, home to the world's largest library at the time.

The early contacts between the Pharaoh's kingdom in Egypt and Europeans, in the millennia before the rise of Christianity, presaged more direct and lasting cultural exchanges between the 'East' (the Near East) and the 'West' (Europe) as far back as 500 BC, when the Greeks and the Persians battled for control of the Near East. Since the

defeat on the battlefield of the Achaemenids by Alexander the Great, and the Greeks' deliberate integration of various Eastern practices into their polity, the Middle East has been a tapestry of cultures. Consequently as much a product of geography and geopolitics as of war and trade, one of the enduring features of the MENA region since pre-modern times has been its rich cultural diversity, which has grown from the cultural fusion of various Eastern and European empires, and the penetration of the region by outside forces. Cultural fusion, in which Graeco–Persian competition led to the integration of Hellenic ways with western Asian cultures, has been the norm in this part of the world.¹¹ Later, Persian–Roman rivalries, and Roman domination of the region for several hundred years, also led to intensive exchanges between the peoples occupying the common borders of Europe and Asia. This, in turn, encouraged further exchanges between the European and Asiatic worlds, although not always friendly ones, judging by the bloody encounters between the Byzantine and Persian states, and of course the role the Crusades played in shaping perceptions across the Mediterranean.

That this region has been cosmopolitan from the rise of the first world empires should be heavily underlined, therefore; as indeed should its role in shaping the first globalized system. John Hobson asserts that globalization in fact started as far back as the sixth century, and that it did so in the East. He takes 500 CE as the starting point of what he terms 'oriental globalisation'. After 500, he notes, 'the Persians, Arabs, Africans, Javanese, Jews, Indians, and the Chinese created and maintained a global economy down to about 1800, in which the major civilisations of the world were at all times interlinked'.¹²

Far from being insular, the Near East has been on the crossroads of different cultures from time immemorial, constantly absorbing cultural invaders from any quarter – even reaching out to other cultures and regions. Goldschmidt explains that the Sasanids, for example, 'sent out scholars to many other countries to collect books, which were translated into the Pahlavi (Middle Persian) language, and to collect scientific and technical lore. Many foreign scholars were attracted to Persia, a tolerant kingdom in which Nestorian Christians, Jews, and Buddhists could worship and proselytize freely. Driven from a bigoted Byzantine Empire, in the fifth century, Nestorian savants found refuge at the legendary Persian academy of Jundishapur, a center for the preservation of Hellenistic culture ... Scholars and students came from all parts of Europe and Asia to teach and study there, unhindered by racial prejudice, religious dogma, or political restrictions'.¹³ That Hellenic civilization was consciously being protected by a non-European power should provide some concrete evidence for the thesis that the Middle East has been not just big on cultural interaction, but also tolerant and welcoming of other ways of life. On the western flanks of the region, links were also being sought with Europe, culminating in the rise of Muslim kingdoms in Andalusia from the ninth century. What is clear from even a cursory examination of the MENA civilizations is that none ever emerged or grew in geographical or cultural isolation; the Egyptians, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Persians, and Muslim Arab empires hailing from these lands expanded their realms of influence through assimilation and interaction with their neighbours. Muslim empires, in particular, enjoyed a sophisticated economic system that was built on the efforts of merchants and the principles of commerce. As Maxine Rodinson has noted, 'the density of commercial relations within the Muslim world constituted a sort of world market ... of unprecedented dimensions. The development of exchange had made

possible regional specialisation in industry as well as in agriculture, bringing about relations of economic interdependence that sometimes extended over great distances. A world market of the same type was formed in the Roman empire, but the Muslim “common market” was very much bigger ... Not only did the Muslim world know a capitalistic sector, but this sector was apparently the most extensive and highly developed in history before the establishment of the world market created by the western European bourgeoisie, and this did not outstrip it in importance until the sixteenth century’.¹⁴

Islamic empires, in other words, had already made great strides towards integration of vast territories through trade before Europe had even awakened to the very real new economic opportunities presented beyond its borders: ‘the birth of oriental globalisation’, maintains Hobson, ‘owes much to the Islamic [world]. The Muslims (and Negroes) of Africa as well as Muslims of the Middle East were the real global capitalist pioneers, serving to weave together a global economy of significant scale and importance’.¹⁵ This early global economy, the heart of which was in the Near East, extended far, into China and Polynesia in the east, and the Eurasian landmass and western European sea-lanes in the west.

With the rise of Islam and the establishment of the tradition of the annual Pilgrimage, Mecca and Medina emerged as the new cosmopolitan cultural centres of the Middle East, providing new bridges between the region and the rest of the world. Soon Muslims from all over Asia would be rubbing shoulders with each other, exchanging ideas and learning from each other’s traditions – the types of exchange that still take place during the annual Hajj festival. Other Islamic cities far removed from the nerve-centre of the faith, such as Karouwan in Tunisia, served a similar purpose. These trans-national links were so rich and intensive that Abd-El-Kader Cheref has even suggested that ‘the first Islamic state established by Prophet Muhammad was ... the commencement of globalization of the human society’.¹⁶

As is evident, then, the Middle East has been exposed to outside forces for a longer time than there have been modern states; on the surface globalization, following the colonial and imperial storms of recent centuries, should have posed no real new threat to the region, or at least should not be seen as threatening by these societies. Yet globalization has been seen across the MENA region as posing both a challenge and a new kind of existential threat to the ‘Muslim way of life’. It is therefore being resisted in the same vein that colonialism and imperialism once were, perhaps even more vigorously, given the responses to it since the late 1980s. Against the backdrop of an inclusive and enlightened environment surrounding the rise of Islamic empires since the seventh century, why globalization should be seen with such open hostility is one of the paradoxes of our time. For all the region’s open borders through the ages and its extensive cultural interactions, globalization is being resisted by several governments and movements as the bearer of a challenge greater than colonialism, and a threat greater than ungodly Marxism. Understanding what it is about globalization that causes so much anxiety, how globalization is formulated in the Middle East, and what people in the region mean by this term will be crucial in any attempt to make sense of the nature of the policy and intellectual debates in the region. This is a prerequisite, it seems, for any assessment of the impact of globalization on the Middle East.

Dar el-Islam Fights Back?

Fanon was one of the main authorities drawing attention to the corrosive power of colonial/imperial cultures in the less-developed countries, but also wrote in a semi-romantic fashion of an ‘Arab awakening’ in the 1950s and 1960s. Arab writers, he said, ‘reminded their people of the great pages of their history [in] reply to the lies told by the occupying power’. This awakening, he argued, was the antithesis of the colonial cultural imposition: ‘The struggle for national liberty has been accompanied by a cultural phenomenon known by the name of the awakening of Islam ... The Arab leaders have tried to return to the famous Dar El Islam which shone so brightly from the twelfth to the fourteenth century’.¹⁷ For Fanon, Dar el-Islam represented a ‘firebreak’ against colonialist/imperialist culture. As one traces the intellectual evolution of such debates, it is interesting that Fanon’s version of the political importance of Dar el-Islam in colonial times has, since the 1970s, been transplanted onto a new political–religious force, commonly known as the revivalist Islamic movements – or political Islam. But Fanon’s Dar el-Islam and political Islam do not share the same social space or, strictly speaking, the same function. Fukuyama aptly noted that the strength of political Islam or, as he says, Islamic revival, ‘can only be understood if one understands how deeply the dignity of Islamic society had been wounded in its double failure to maintain the coherence of its traditional society and to successfully assimilate the techniques and values of the West’.¹⁸ While the appeal of Dar el-Islam to Fanon was clearly in its power, in the hands of Arab nationalist elites, to present an authentic and indigenous force against imperialism, the Islamic revivalists of today represent a very different strand, more of a counter-cultural fight back from within the Muslim *umma* – a defensive response to the power of the authoritarian ruling state on the one hand, and to globalization on the other. As Mandaville notes, ‘hegemony in its Western guise is not the only obstacle contemporary Islam needs to negotiate; there is also hegemony within’.¹⁹ This is very much a local–global challenge, and will need to be revisited in several ways. The cultural realm of the debate is still with us, but takes a slightly different shape when presented within the globalization paradigm.

Returning to the broader debate of earlier times about imperialism and cultural domination, the culture-specific arguments developed in the 1950s and 1960s by such authorities as Fanon and Sartre ran counter to the views expressed by the father of radical political economy, Karl Marx. Marx had done more than any thinker to expose the links between the economics and the cultural underpinnings of capitalism – which today form the fundamental elements of the globalization debate. For Marx, the ‘Asiatic’ world was both despotic and, in historical terms, primitive. His was an unguarded Euro-centric view of the world. In 1853, for instance, he cautioned readers of the *New York Daily Tribune* that ‘we must not forget that these idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies’.²⁰ As Carrere d’Encausse and Schram have observed, to say that the Asian countries ‘are still at a phase corresponding to the dawn of civilization, and that they would never have emerged from their stagnation without Western intervention, is to condemn in advance any attempt by the peoples of these countries to

modernize while retaining their own personalities'.²¹ If Marx could speak to us today, he might argue that globalization was the catalyst for civilization change that the less-developed world needed. But he might also add that the developing world was incapable of managing the advances brought by globalization. He could indeed see the reinforcement of despotism as a reaction to global capitalism.

Others, notably Bill Warren, put forward an alternative view: that capitalism was indeed the liberating force Marx had identified it to be. In his classic, *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism*, Warren deliberately adopted an 'early Marxian' methodology in his analysis of capitalist development outside Europe, to argue that imperialism was indeed the most effective way of introducing the dialectical energies of capitalism into the developing world. In this he could be classed as an early advocate of globalization and a strong critic of exceptionalism as a virtue. Capital export, far from being a feature of capitalist stagnation, as Lenin had suggested, was in fact an important measure of its success and dynamism, and a 'significant feature of industrial capitalism since its inception'.²² Capital export (leading to growth of industry and manufacturing) was the same energy seen in the less-developed countries in the post-1945, post-colonial world. Imperialism (read globalization) was a 'powerful engine of progressive social change [which had brought] substantial industrialisation and capitalist transformation' to the developing world, said Warren.²³

A century after Marx's judgement came the biggest challenge to Marx's Eurocentric perspective, when the Chinese Communist Party finally triumphed over its domestic foes and imperial powers, and founded Asia's first and largest Peoples' Republic. Mao's China saw the emergence of the biggest theoretical challenge of all to classical Marxism, that of 'Asiocentric communism'. The birth of the Peoples' Republic of China created fundamental geopolitical and intellectual challenges for the Soviet Marxist-Leninists who had come to believe in the supremacy of the working class, the proletariat, over all other 'oppressed' classes, and had come to see this class as the most likely revolutionary class. Thus by the mid-twentieth century we had come full circle, and parted very significantly from the perspectives first enunciated by Marx in the 1850s and 1860s about the absence of socioeconomic vibrancy in the less-developed world and Asiatic society's lack of potential for political development. Today the same debates are being rehearsed in the context of globalization debates and the Middle East and its purported 'exceptionalism'.

Thus the debate regarding globalization and the Middle East is subject to similar culturally driven, as well as political economy, arguments. The region is seen by some as backward in political and economic terms because it has suffered social deprivation, thanks to despotic elites and religious fanaticism. An important work on the 'prospects of democracy', for example, has posed the question 'whether some characteristics of Muslim culture make democratization more difficult in Islamic countries than in the countries of other cultural areas'. An explanation of a wealth of empirical data presented offers the following conclusion: 'because Muslim culture unites the countries of the [MENA and Central Asia] regional group and separates them from most countries of the other regional groups, one could argue that some features of Muslim culture strengthen the concentration of political power. It may be that power-holders can increase their control of intellectual power resources by identifying themselves with Islam just like the former Christian rulers in Europe were allied with the Church'.²⁴ Mirroring earlier

debates, Muslim culture is again being portrayed as nurturing and nourishing despotism. The assertion is that the cultural realm has stifled progress on the political front, while the problems resulting from the unique political economy of the region have contributed to holding back progressive social forces. Repression of women can be seen as a classic example of how religion might have helped keep the region 'backward' and seemingly detached from the global forces around it.

The tendency towards concentrating political power in the hands of a few men is what Hisham Sharabi labelled a unique form of neo-patriarchy in the Arab world. This is a patriarchal form which is 'neither European nor Asiatic, as Marx has characterized these', but one that has 'its own peculiar history and structure, which can be identified as distinctively Arab (Islamic), not merely Asian or non-European'.²⁵ This Arab (Islamic) neo-patriarchy is now facing the forces of globalization, and far from being a progressive force in the way Fanon had depicted, is today perceived as an outmoded and reactionary one that is not only unable to respond positively to challenges of the domestic arena, but is also incapable of mediating the pressures of an ever-changing and dynamic regional and international environment.

The Strategic Context: 9/11, Globalization and the Greater Middle East

For the purposes of broader discussion it is assumed here that MENA is a regional system, but the term 'system' is used loosely and does not imply the existence of a cohesive regional order. 'System' is used to refer to the existence of a set of interactive and dynamic relationships between the group of Arab countries in this region; between these and a set of non-Arab actors (Iran, Israel, Turkey, and also Afghanistan, Pakistan, and parts of Central Asia); and between the entire group of states and non-state actors from Morocco in the west to the northern shores of the Arabian and Caspian seas in the east and north-east. This is today's broader or GME, forming a unique strategic unit. At critical junctures, one can identify concert in action among the subsets of the GME states, and even some policy congruence over what are perceived to be region-wide security issues. But this tends to be the exception rather than the rule, for the geopolitics of this area encourages competition and rivalry as one of its inherent drivers.

As already noted, there is a need to explore the multifaceted impact that globalization is – and is perceived to be – having on the region. Globalization is a phenomenon that exists, and is the essence of what Bill and Chavez have called 'incoherence' and 'chaotic turbulence'.²⁶ We therefore also need to understand why 'probably no area in the world resists ... globalization to an extent equating that of the Islamic Middle East [and why] the majority of regimes, opposition movements, and intellectuals in the region are consciously anti-globalization'.²⁷

Moreover, we must note the strategic consequences of the region's anti-globalists' position of seeing the USA as its main enemy. Somewhat simplified, the prevailing line of thinking goes as follows: since the end of the Cold War the USA has dominated the international system and, because it no longer has a global counterweight, it has been able to lead globalization unhindered. The USA is therefore pursuing global domination through military force and economic penetration. As the Muslim world, particularly its

heartland in the Middle East, provides the strongest base of resistance to US designs, it has been targeted by Washington, whose aggressive intentions have become more pronounced since 9/11. In this region, it is heard, the USA is only interested in securing Israel's regional hegemony and in monopolizing the Muslim world's core asset, its hydrocarbon deposits. So everything it does will – inevitably, according to this line of thought – be driven by a deep desire to weaken the Muslim states and to break down their resistance. In practical terms, the struggle over Iraq's future subsequent to the fall of Baghdad to Anglo–American military forces in spring 2003 has largely been seen in this light by the USA's enemies.

Examples of this line of Islamist-leaning, but also nationalist, thinking can be gleaned from a wide range of speeches and statements issued by representatives of such forces. But in order to demonstrate the depth of this line of reasoning, we can illustrate the classic position through the words of a British Muslim, who stated in early 2003 that 'it is generally believed the real American objective behind an invasion [of Iraq] is to change the political map of the Middle East, appropriate its oil wealth and appoint Israel as a regional superpower exercising total hegemony over the entire Middle East and beyond'.²⁸ This has been an often-repeated Muslim view. Lord Heseltine (a former British deputy prime minister and a member of the establishment) has reflected on this sentiment and concluded that 'in the Middle East there is the beginning of a holy war because there is a focus of discontent which, if we don't get a grip, will fester and grow'.²⁹ The two views, although expressed from the opposite poles of the debate, convey the same message: Western action is seen as a direct challenge to the integrity of the Muslim world.

But, ironically, the debate about globalization in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 focused more on the limits of globalization.³⁰ Indeed, 9/11 was viewed in some business circles as a real dampener on globalization. The argument was made that the terror attacks could result in a reduction in the pace of integration, travel, and communication, which would ultimately weaken the globalization process. Undoubtedly 9/11 has made it harder for goods, people, and services to travel across borders, particularly in and out of the Western countries. But is this sufficient evidence to argue the demise of globalizing forces?³¹ Proponents of globalization, who see it as the articulation of a series of economic-related systems dependent on the continuing mobility of capital, certainly do not think so. The 9/11 terrorist attacks have not disrupted the flow of capital across any border.

As 9/11 came to emphasize the cultural distance between the world's regions, globalization had already substantially narrowed the intellectual and commercial gap between them. For capital there was no option but to attack other markets; this had been the fundamental logic of capitalism from its inception. In the course of the twentieth century Western capital, in all its forms, exported itself to all corners of the globe, respecting neither communism nor planned economic systems. The terrorist attacks, witnessed live or in near-real time by many millions around the globe, may have changed the backdrop for the debate about globalization, but have not affected its onward march.

If we accept the premise that globalization carries within it the two-dimensional force of simultaneous but opposite movements of global integration and local separation, then it is possible to maintain that challenges from the global level will generate their own counter-forces from below. Thus for every global actor, like the USA, there will

necessarily be a local rebel, an often-violent Spartacus. In the geopolitical framework of the GME, post-9/11, the global actor has to cope not only with the national insecurities that follow global integration (in the shape of al-Qaeda's reach to America's heartland and that of its global allies), but also the challenges posed by radical Islam in this strategically vital region – whether in Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, or in Algeria, Morocco, or Tunisia.

So, on the American side, 9/11 has not only raised new suspicions about the faith of Islam and Muslims in general; has not only forced the instinctively introvert Bush administration to revitalize the USA's international role; has not only led it to military intervention in the affairs of more than one weak and vulnerable Muslim state (Afghanistan, Iraq); has not only encouraged it to perceive the Muslim world (and the Middle East in particular) as backward and therefore in urgent need of active modernization and development (democratization); but has also, in the light of information coming to the fore about the nationality of the hijackers and their associational links with the al-Qaeda network, caused it to re-evaluate its relations with some of its closest allies in the Arab world. As we will see, America's reassessment of its Arab partnerships has had a direct impact on the security narrative of the region, and has left a mark on the domestic politics of many of its regional partners. The White House's declaration that the region was in need of renewal and reform – in need of intervention – has formed the basic platform of the USA's relationships and priorities in the GME region.³²

In this mission, the administration received intellectual support from several important quarters, forces that within weeks of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 had already raised the spectre of radical Islam as a deadly foe of the West, and the prospects of a clash of cultures and civilizations.³³ 'A new spectre is haunting America', Douglas Streusand warned in 1989, 'one that some Americans consider more sinister than Marxism–Leninism ... That spectre is Islam'.³⁴ Daniel Pipes had warned the West in 1990 that the 'Muslims are coming!'.³⁵ These analysts, notes Gerges, invoked familiar Cold War concepts 'to sharpen public concern and fear about a new Islamic threat'.³⁶ Moreover, well before 9/11, these figures had drawn a dangerous image of rampant Islam in an unstable MENA region, in which terrorism and proliferation combined to create a direct challenge to the safety of the West.

In September 2001, their seemingly prophetic warnings about the 'green peril' had come to pass; their chance to shape the agenda on Islam had come. The discourse on globalization and the political relations between the USA and the Muslim world were now hostages to the battle against international–transnational Islamic terrorism. Huntington stated that the 'con-temporary global politics is the age of Muslim wars. Muslims fight each other and fight non-Muslims far more than do peoples of other civilizations. Muslim wars have replaced the cold war as the principal form of international conflict'.³⁷

As already noted, 9/11 ignited a much wider debate in the West, particularly in the USA, about the 'problems' of the Muslim world, the place of Islam as a seventh-century phenomenon in a modern society, the role of Islam in the socialization process and politicization of Muslim populations, the educational role Islam played in curricula around the Muslim world, and the relationship between Islam and culture and politics in Muslim societies.³⁸ In some Western circles it became imperative to reinforce the secular

(and Western) underpinnings of the state. Thus, in 2004 in France, all outward, public signs of religious symbolism were banned, and to the dismay of many hundreds of pious French Muslims the wearing of the Islamic veil, along with the display of other religions' symbols, was outlawed. Paris's policy generated an angry response from all corners of the Muslim world, and even led al-Qaeda to declare that the ban 'is new evidence of the extent of the Crusaders' hatred for Muslims, even if they brag about democracy, freedom and human rights. France, the country of liberty defends only the liberty of nudity, debauchery and decay, while fighting chastity and modesty'.³⁹

On the Middle East side, the terrorist acts were received with genuine shock and horror. But beyond sympathies with the human tragedy that had unfolded, many in the region saw in the Bush administration's responses a reinforcement of their perceptions of the USA as the hegemonic and anti-Islam power of our time – the New Rome – whose mission was to destroy Muslim culture and way of life, to dominate Muslim lands and societies, and to usurp its natural and other resources. The perception is, said Malaysia's prime minister Mahathir Mohamad, 'that Muslim countries seem to be the target everywhere – Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Chechnya, Iran, Iraq ... It is a question of injustice. It seems that it is all right for Palestinians to die, or Afghans to die. Thousands of Bosnians died, 200,000 died, and the world watched on TV and did nothing ... But if you kill anybody else that is wrong'.⁴⁰ Mahathir Mohamad, it should be noted, was no anti-Western fanatic: he was one of the few Muslim leaders who had not only embraced globalization, but had been a close partner of the West in the Far East.

The war on terror, moreover, was said to be 'a campaign to wrench Muslim societies from their religious roots'.⁴¹ In this climate of fear and suspicion, the already strong perception that globalization was a Western tool for subjugation of the developing world was reinforced. Unfortunately, the security responses to 9/11 in the USA and the West in general further reinforced the impression of globalization as an American agent for the destruction of Islam and Muslims. A typical position was that of a group of 209 prominent Muslims from across the Arab world, who in a statement issued in November 2002, argued that the USA was intent on 'wiping out the Islamic identity, spread American culture in the region, control its oil wealth and cover up for its failure in Afghanistan'. In a telling combination of geopolitical and cultural analysis, the signatories stated that the USA 'wants to plunge the region into turmoil, prevent development and protect Israel and ensure its superiority'.⁴²

In short, in the aftermath of the September 2001 attacks, the vigorous debate on the intricacies of globalization and Middle Eastern encounters with the process were slowly relegated to a subdivision of the discussions of Islam as a faith, its place in the global village, and the essence of Muslim–Western relations.

To the radical Islamists, on the other hand, 9/11 had not only 'taught the Americans a lesson' for what was to be its arrogant behaviour and unjust policies towards the Middle East; it had at the same time provided the excuse for the Americans to unleash their power against Islam. The battle, at last, had been joined. As a leading Egyptian Islamist put it, 'What the US is trying to do is change Islam from within. The campaigns against Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Kashmir and Sudan [show this, but will also] definitely awaken the sleeping giant'.⁴³ The persistent claim that the USA was seeking to 'change Islam from within' was symptomatic of two related developments. First, an acknowledgement by the Islamists that the USA's reach in the region was indeed

extensive – that although it was a global power, it had also become a local actor. And second, that the greater Middle East was already highly penetrated and greatly vulnerable to the pressures that global forces could bring to its societies. Globalization was, in America's hands, the vehicle for this two-pronged attack.

Terrorism and Geopolitics: The 9/11 Effect

While the 'war on terror' campaign of the USA was no doubt an understandable security response to an unprecedented crisis, its formulation, which directly targeted parts of the Muslim world, coupled with the sentiment expressed by President George W. Bush that 'if you are not with us then you are against us', left little doubt in many minds in the Muslim world that the real target was indeed their realm.⁴⁴ The president's statement merely added fuel to fires already raging. An example is the comments made by a highly respected Egyptian intellectual on US motives: 'I don't think the US has a new map for the region yet, a new Sykes–Picot formulation', he wrote, 'But what it does want is to shake up established customs and ways of doing things. It is already putting pressure on Arab and Islamic countries to alter curricula, liberate the economy, allow more freedom of expression, change the status of women, and restrain the role of at least some religious institutions ... the US is engaged in policies aimed at undermining movements antagonistic to the US or to reform imposed from abroad. There are attempts to create a deeper sense of humiliation, either through [deliberately] insulting comments by US officials or through disrupting the efforts of Arab and Islamic countries to help the Palestinians ... The aim is to deprive these regimes of any chance to regroup or rehabilitate the Arab regional system. The US is using all its strength to get Arab and Islamic countries to capitulate, one after another ... Washington will continue until the Islamic and Arab community loses cohesion, Islam's penchant for *jihad* ebbs, and the pan-Arab movement runs out of steam. At which time the 'greater Middle East', promised by President Bush ... will finally materialise'.⁴⁵

The Arab and Muslim fears of the USA's motives were further raised when, within weeks of the atrocities, other voices in the USA, particularly evangelical preachers from the vast American religious establishment, began to criticize Islam in their television broadcasts and other communications. The theme of the commentaries was straightforward: 'Islam is at war with us', as stated by Paul Weyrich, an influential Washington figure. Three individuals, in particular, were singled out by Islamic groups and Muslim leaders for expressing the most offensive anti-Islam views: Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Franklin Graham (the son of well known televangelist Billy Graham). In an interview broadcast in early October 2002 on CBS television's *60 Minutes* news programme, Falwell joined the fringe of Islam-bashers by calling Prophet Mohammed 'a terrorist'. Barely a year earlier, Franklin Graham had been criticized for stating in November 2001 that Islam was 'a very evil and wicked religion'. For his part, Pat Robertson had said in February 2002 that Islam was a religion of violence seeking to 'dominate and then, if need be, destroy'. His words were echoed in the political establishment by a member of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board, Kenneth Adelman, who stated that 'the more you examine the religion [Islam], the more militant it seems. After all, its founder, Mohammed, was a warrior, not a peace advocate like Jesus'.⁴⁶ Such views, articulated by prominent American parsons and commentators, underlined the gulf

that 9/11 had opened up between the world of Islam and the USA, for a similar line of attack on the USA was daily being reinforced by the traditional and radical Islamist forces across the vast territories of Asia, Africa, and Europe, where most Muslims lived.

At the conceptual level, also, we can find reasons why the USA should be emerging as the single most important target of anti-Western/anti-globalization radical forces in the Muslim world. Part of the answer may lie in the analysis of Levy, who had shown back in the 1960s that since the rise of the less-developed world, the late-developer (late-modernizing) countries have tended to follow the example set by their 'modern' (that is to say Western) counterparts. Today, the society to emulate and imitate in terms of innovation, technological and industrial achievements is of course the USA which, according to Levy, represents 'the most extreme example of modernization' in the world.⁴⁷ For its dynamism and global reach, the USA would surely make an easy target for those forces that resist the march of globalization. If one adds to this Sklair's observation that the USA is the only country in the world 'whose agents, organizations and classes are hegemonic in all three spheres' of politics, culture and economics,⁴⁸ then one can again develop a real focus for the depth of animosity between radical Islamist forces and the USA. In no uncertain terms, these groups see the USA as the ultimate hegemon – a powerful and unrivalled bully who is also the guardian of the contemporary international system, with all the inequities, cultural deprivation and plundering that this global system breeds.

But amidst the confusion, 9/11 also brought a badly needed sense of purpose to the Muslims, whose own civilization was already tearing itself apart over ideology, purpose, governance, distribution of political and economic power, and control of the Muslim agenda in a post-bipolar world. Before 9/11, an intensive 'clash of civilizations' was already going on in Afghanistan between various Muslim states supporting or fighting the Taleban. A flavour of the ferocity of the inter-Islamic clashes can be gleaned from a semi-official Iranian publication on international Islamic developments. This article is significant for its assessment of the rise of the Taleban in Afghanistan and the tenor of its analysis with regard to Iran's Muslim neighbours:

Thus, with American arms and with petrodollars from certain oil-rich [Gulf Arab] states, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of the Pakistani armed forces created the schools that had mushroomed with Saudi money in Afghan refugee camps for the spread of schismatic Wahhabi beliefs ... [The Taleban] first made their appearance on the Afghan scene in 1995 with Pakistani military advisors in their train. However, their record ... shows that the Taleban are neither Islamic nor all of them are Afghans.⁴⁹

On one hand, it was claimed that the Taleban was created in order to discredit Islam; on the other, it was argued that the Taleban was manufactured in Pakistan and Afghanistan by some Muslim states as a tool in their own battles against other Islamic traditions. The 9/11 attacks did not affect these differences much, but they did have a very direct impact on the geopolitics of Islam after the USA unleashed its military might against the al-Qaeda bases in Afghanistan and their Taleban backers. As the war unfolded, the Taleban as a viable political force was extinguished, support from two key Gulf Arab states (Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) ceased, the military government in Pakistan

drew nearer to the USA, and the presence of anti-American radical Islam in South and Southeast Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, and the former Asian republics of the Soviet Union intensified. The 9/11 attacks also intensified the battle within Islam as Salafi forces and al-Qaeda affiliates increased their attacks on Shias after the fall of the Sunni-dominated regime in Baghdad in April 2003.

Cultural Geography and American Power

A direct, and perhaps inevitable, consequence of these developments has been the confrontation (sometimes political and sometimes violent) that has appeared at the intersections of contact between the USA and the Muslim countries. It is at these crossroads that radical Islam, initially in the shape of al-Qaeda, has been able to sharpen its angle of attack. In Pakistan in October 2002, for instance, it was the alliance of six anti-American Islamic groups that emerged to form the single most important opposition force in Pakistan's parliamentary elections. The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) is no friend of the West or the ruling establishment in Islamabad. It not only views the Taleban with favour, but is vehemently opposed to any interaction with the USA. Its leader, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, has said that he 'will not accept US bases and western culture'.⁵⁰ The MMA's general secretary (Mian Aslam) stated shortly after the poll that 'The Taliban are our brothers. They are good people. The idea [that] they are bad is a misconception of the West'.⁵¹ Their electoral success, it has been evident for some time, has not only hampered the hunt for al-Qaeda members in Pakistan and Afghanistan, but also threatened the stability of Pakistan's government and its foreign partnerships.

The second instance of the web of confrontation between the two took place just 2 days later, when a massive car bomb destroyed a popular entertainment district in the holiday resort of Bali (Indonesia), killing hundreds of Western tourists and dozens of others. The fact that the attack might have been linked to a darker al-Qaeda plot emerged in the context of bin Laden's earlier comments about Australia's role in harming the land of Islam in Indonesia. He had said, back in November 2001, that the Australians were part and parcel of the same Christian 'crusaders' who had entered Muslim lands.⁵² Under the guise of United Nations peace-keeping operations in East Timor, the Australians had set foot on sacred Muslim soil and were part of 'a long series of conspiracies, a war of annihilation [against Islam]'. The Australians were part of the conspiracy to dismember Muslim Indonesia, he claimed, and were an active member of the same United Nations organization that had, in 1947, 'surrendered the land of Muslims to the Jews'. They were therefore guilty by action as well as association, and therefore their citizens were viewed as a legitimate target.

Both events introduced a new political factor in Washington's relations with these important Muslim countries, particularly as, combined, they came to exercise significant influence on the geopolitics of Islam in very unpredictable ways. The front against militant Islam had broadened in dangerous ways, and the governments of these countries were forced to make unpalatable choices between their domestic agendas and management of power relations at home, and their security obligations towards the international community. These governments, and many others like them across the Muslim world, have tried to postpone the unpalatable choice between security and democracy for as long as possible, but with its choice of targets across many lands al-

Qaeda has persistently tested the stability of the balance being sought by moderate Muslim governments between legitimacy at home and the provision of security.⁵³ Such precarious conditions considerably complicate the politics of globalization in the Muslim world, which up to this point had been subsumed within the basket of cultural concerns. Domestic politics, and with it national security, after the autumn of 2001 had been caught up in the geopolitical firestorm generated by 9/11.

So, by the time the USA attacked Afghanistan in October 2001, the geopolitical impact of 9/11 had helped increase the sense of siege in the two contending poles of Islam and the West, and had sharpened the debate in the Middle East about globalization. The impression that globalization was an intrusive and imposed force in turn reinforced the notion that a clash of cultures was indeed taking place, in ways that Samuel Huntington had been severely criticized for suggesting in 1993. But if Islam is believed to be both religion and state, it would stand to reason that the clash would also be between Islam and the globalization spearheaded by the West, for globalization targets both the state and its cultural and socio-economic underpinnings.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the MENA region presented the West with both a huge security challenge and a golden opportunity to smash the residues of resistance to true modernization – to ‘marketization’. Here was a historic chance to shape the region in the mould of the advanced countries fit for the twenty-first century. To even whisper the words ‘regime change’ in the mid-twentieth century and during the birth of the post-colonial era would have been interpreted as a direct assault on another country’s sovereignty; to openly pursue it in the twenty-first century, as the USA did with regard to Iraq and others, demonstrates on the one hand the erosion of the sanctimonious state as the inviolable unit of international politics, and on the other the impact globalization has had on the constellation of international forces. In the post-9/11 international order, regimes and regions that posed a challenge to the security of the West and its regional interests have themselves been challenged without impunity. Force has been mobilized to effect change (Afghanistan and Iraq), and pressure has been applied elsewhere in order to expedite it (Saudi Arabia, Iran, Libya, Syria, Sudan), all with grave and unforeseen geopolitical consequences.

It is being accepted that, in the highly interdependent and globalized international system of the twenty-first century, local and regional insecurities need to be dealt with at source, for they can easily escalate into clear and present dangers for the entire system. It was noted earlier that the local–international dichotomy is a natural by-product of the globalization process itself, for the operating assumption here is that globalization is ‘a two-dimensional process engendering simultaneous but opposite movements – towards global integration and an enhanced focus on the local. For every new self there is a new other, for every global truth there is a local dissent, for every global lord there is a local rebel’.⁵⁴ Given this dichotomy, it is not at all surprising that 9/11 has caused a sudden shift in the world’s new East– West boundaries, and has brought the globalism of America to the heart of the ‘particularist’ Middle East. As explored throughout this book, in the greater Middle East ‘glocalization’ is at its sharpest edge.