

# Geopolitics of the Islam World and world leadership in the post-Cold War geopolitical developments\*

Saeid Naji & Jayum A. Jawan

## 1 Introduction

This research is an introductory work concerning the geopolitics of the Islam world and the world leadership in the post-Cold War geopolitical developments. This is an endeavor to analyze the role of the Islam world in the formation of a new geopolitical world order, in which the United States is the leading contender for the world leadership position in the new geopolitical order. In addition, this work attempts to examine the potential capabilities and capacities of the Islamic countries to presence in the contemporary global rivalries' scene, in which will form structure of the new geopolitical order. In this study, with reference to some well-known theoretical and practical approaches offered concerning the clash of civilizations, soft and hard power resources, and geo-economics, the role of the Islam World will be analyzed. Moreover, the long cycles of world leadership with concentration on the US geopolitical practices as the sole remaining superpower from the Cold War will be utilized to analyze the global conditions and the US attempts to preserve its world leadership position in the contemporary age.

To do this, there is a need to pay attention to two crucial issues: first, regarding geopolitical developments and the US attempts to maintain its highest global position, what could be the role of the Islam World within the global rivalries? Moreover, can the Islamic World be counted on as a serious challenger to the US world leadership, and a contender for world leadership? Second, regarding the developments in the Islamic countries, in political, economic and cultural terms, as well as their geopolitical potentials, could it be possible for the union of the Islamic countries to be the leader of the Islamic world? In this respect, it would be necessary to briefly review the post-Cold War developments and some relevant theories which are related to this research. We should take a short look at the geopolitical capabilities of the Islam World with the focus on some countries as well as presenting a general overview of these states and examine the US approach in the context of the post-Cold War developments to the world and its world leadership position. This would offer a possible understanding of the above-mentioned issues.

## 2 The post-Cold war geopolitical developments

In this section, it is important to review some geopolitical developments, in particular, two distinctive areas: the geopolitical events and the geopolitical theories, which were observed immediately after the Cold War era.

### 2.1 Global geopolitical developments

The end of the Cold War signaled the end of the old geopolitical world order and the beginning of a geopolitical transition period. Moreover, it was the beginning of new global rivalries jostling to gain the world leadership, historically perceived as long cycles of world leadership. These rivalries have always

---

\*This Article was already presented in the International conference on "Leadership and Social Science Change in the Muslim World: Prospects and Challenges" in International Islamic University Malaysia, in February 2012.

formed attempts to create a new global system with a new rule and new distribution of power which in some geopolitical studies has been called a geopolitical world order. From this view, immediately after the end of the Cold War era, the structure of the global system faced geopolitical disorder. It means that the global governing system broke down and changed the old order, while the new order had not yet been established (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995). This uncertainty and geopolitical disorder, on the one hand, was the consequence of inefficiency of previous rules, institutions and ideas as well as current geopolitical codes to solve international problems. On the other hand, it warned of the necessity to redefine the geopolitical codes as the 'main building blocks of geopolitical world orders'<sup>1</sup> based on new conditions, in particular, for great powers. In this respect, it was an attempt to impose geopolitical codes or a specific political agenda, associated with a particular culture, rule and ideas, on other states, through either command power or co-optive power.<sup>2</sup> This formed the beginning of a new type of rivalry amongst the great powers to forming a new structure of distribution of power around the world and eventually the reconstruction of geopolitical world order. Indeed, to reconstruct geopolitical order, it was necessary to redefine the geopolitical codes by the great powers (Flint & Taylor, 2007; Nijman, 1993; Nye, 1990).

What is important here is that until that time, the United States, as the sole remaining power from the last world order, had not been able to impose its code on others. There were attempts by the US to promote its position in the international system on the one hand, and regional disorders and resistances in different levels to accept US global desires on the other hand. This situation has been discussed academically in relation to the position of the great powers in the world political system as a declining phase, which a hegemonic power or world leader faces during its world leadership. To study this situation of the United States as the world leader of the twentieth century and its position in the geopolitical world order, there is a need to discuss the long cycles of world politics (or hegemonic cycles) or the rise and fall of great powers or what in general is called the theories of hegemonic transition and stability (Kennedy, 1989; Modelski, 1987; Nye, 1990; Taylor & Flint, 2000; Wallerstein, 1984). This is in respect of the main idea that a study of geopolitical world orders must be done in the context of hegemonic or long cycles. Modelski (1978), for example, claims that each long cycle is associated with one global power. To him, long cycles are the product of 'the urge to make a global order', and such 'long cycles occur because there is a global system susceptible to such fluctuations' (p. 224). Therefore, to better understand the US position and its declining power, there is a need to review briefly the developments in relation to the long cycles of world politics.

## 2.2 Theoretical and conceptual developments

One of the most important theories presented is Huntington's Clash of Civilizations thesis. Huntington (1993), referred to religion as a strong element in world developments. For him, religious and cultural commonalities even form economic cooperations among countries. Huntington forms an allied front of two civilizations, Islamic and Confucian, against western civilization. To Huntington (1993), the Islamic-Confucian connection is the most permanent form of cooperation, which will challenge western interests, values and power. He also determined that the most significant civilizational convergence was that between Islam and Confucian civilizations against western civilization.

Simultaneously, world politics had faced changes in the factors of power assessment. Indeed, it had begun to replace military force with economic power as a significant characteristic in the structure of international relations. From this view, economic growth associated with technology and education played a more important role in assessment of success in the international system than conventional geopolitical attributes of power (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995, p. 4). At that time, geoeconomics, as a new concept, established a logical relationship between economy, politics and geography, and helped the formation of different interpretations of global political economic space.

Linking the economic factors with the political objectives, in particular in the global political competitions context, is associated with emphasis on the vital resources of specific regions, such as the geoeconomic importance of the Caucasus and Central Asia (O'Hara & Heffernan, 2006) and the geoeconomic importance of

<sup>1</sup>For more details about geopolitical code and geopolitical world order see (Taylor, 1993; Taylor & Flint, 2000).

<sup>2</sup>These terms have been introduced by Joseph Nye so that those terms have been equated with hard and soft power. For more information see (Nye, 1990).

the Persian Gulf region as a 'geoeconomic pivot' (Morrissey, 2008). It also refers to operating the geoeconomic logic along with the geopolitical logic (Mercille, 2010). Geoeconomics, in fact, was used to analyze the interstate relations to describe the dominance of economics over politics (Luttwak, 1993). In the geoeconomics era, indeed, both the causes and the instruments of conflict are economic (Luttwak, 1990).

Also, the power resources have always acted dynamically and played different critical roles in different periods, and in contrast to tangible resources of power like economic and military might, which have formed the hard command power, the more intangible aspects of power like ideology, culture and institutions, which have been called soft power, have also become more important. In this respect, however, although the soft power resources assumed a greater role at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the military might and economic factors have nevertheless remained significant factors (Nye, 1990).

### 3 The United States and world leadership

The US geopolitical codes inextricably have been linked to the perpetual intention of maintaining and promoting the US world leadership position. This matter was also pursued after the collapse of the Soviet Union when the United States remained as sole superpower in the international scene. Leading an international coalition against Iraq in 1991 apparently demonstrated the US world leadership within a unipolar system, but the emergence of some other great powers as serious rivals indicated a potential world tendency toward a multipolar system so much so that some commentators have predicted this type of international system for the future of the world system (Huntington, 1999).

From another perspective, the US position is discussable in the framework of the cyclical changes of the US world leadership. In spite of the US victory in the global ideological and military rivalries of the Cold War, based on long cycles' theories, the United States has passed its 'world power' phase and entered a 'delegitimation' phase since the 1970s. This was brought about by the end of dollar convertibility in 1971, the oil embargo in 1973, and the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. It meant, on the one hand, a decline of US legitimacy in the world, and on the other hand, indicated the onset of the last phase of the long cycle of US world leadership, namely 'deconcentration' of power (Modelske, 1987). From this view, the US world leadership has been challenged by some other global powerful actors. Great powers such as China, India, Russia, Japan and Europe have, from different perspectives, been introduced as other great powers in the new era, those who are considered the main contenders and challengers to the US leadership position (Cohen, 1991; Huntington, 1999; Ikenberry, 1996; Nye, 2002; Taylor, 2004; Wallerstein, 2003).

Therefore, the United States has always attempted to preserve and promote its global position by using both hard and soft power resources, although there is this view that this country has utilized its hard power more than soft power by using force militarily and economically (Nye, 1991). Relying on military might and using military force to confront problems has resulted in a decline of US legitimacy as a world leader. US military capability, being second to none has led to unilateral actions similar to what happened with the Iraq War in 2003. American political leaders, indeed, believed that the United States did not need to get permission on paper to defend its security and they would not hesitate to act alone if necessary (Bush, 2004; NSS, 2002). It is significant to note that the most important wars which have been launched by the United States took place in Islamic countries and resulted in a strong anti-American wave in the Muslim world. In the view of Fukuyama (2004), this was the direct consequence of what the United States did. There is this view that the Gulf War of 1991 revealed the formation of an anti-US front among the Muslim population, although most Muslim countries supported the UN position. This view sees "the rise of Islam as a world political force" (Taylor, 1992), and is a reminder of the "Clash of civilizations" thesis that emphasizes the confrontation of the Western and Islamic civilizations in the new era. Perhaps, the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks were the most crucial events to refer to this confrontation. Although President Bush declared that it was not a clash between civilizations (Bush, 2001a), those attacks, as O'Tuathail (2006) noted, aimed at "two symbols of globalization and American power". The main target was the US as representative of the capitalist world and the challenge was against the US legitimation and its world power.

In addition, two Gulf wars, and the Iraq war besides US support of the Israeli regime by the United States has, from the ideological perspective, strengthened opposing waves in the Muslim world. Moreover,

Iran has acted as an important regional power that has challenged US credibility since 1979, which started with the hostage crisis and has since continued with concerns about the Iranian nuclear program to date. There is this view that the occupation of the US embassy in Iran immediately after the Islamic revolution, symbolically, was a representation of the weakness of the United States, similar to the defeat in Vietnam but on a smaller scale (Taylor, 1993). Therefore, both Iran and Afghanistan, as two Muslim countries became continuing challengers to the US world leadership, so that in Afghanistan the emergence of the Taliban and its support of terrorism, and in Iran, the attempts at forming a global anti-American front have become real and serious challenges for the US.

## 4 The Islam World in the post-Cold War era

The Islam World conditions cannot be seen as separate from the global geopolitical developments. With the collapse of the bipolar system, the world experienced a new type of decolonization as well as geopolitical unification and fragmentation and additional members to the Muslim world. With the release of states from the fetters of political and ideological blocs of west and east, simultaneously as the Islam World was faced to join some independent Muslim countries separated from the former Soviet Union. As the first geopolitical development within the Islam World, countries like Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan with majority Muslim populations and considered Muslim countries declared their independence. These countries later provided the economic and political rivalries contexts to the global and regional competitions between the United States, Russia, China, Iran, Turkey, Israel, and others. It is important to note that these countries, geographically, would be appended to the Middle Eastern countries through Iran as well as to other Muslim states such as Afghanistan and Pakistan. This expanded the Middle East area into the Greater Middle East based on political and economic calculations of great powers (Naji, 2004).

The second significant development was related to wars, ethnic conflicts and civil wars which took place within the Islam World, in particular from Eastern Europe and the Middle East to Africa. In 1990, and immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Saddam Hussein attacked Kuwait when he did not achieve his objective in the eight-year war with Iran. In 1991, the US-led coalition launched Operation Desert Storm, called the Gulf War, against Iraq to liberate Kuwait. After a few years, thousands of Albanians, mostly Muslims, were massacred in Kosovo by Serbs while a million Kosovar Albanians were forced from their homes during the late 1990s, which finally ended through NATO intervention in 1999 (NATO, 1999). In addition, the first and then second Chechen Wars, started in 1994 between Muslim Chechens in Chechnya and Russia's troops. At that time, the Chechnyan government had claimed to transform the republic into an Islamic state and renaming it 'The Islamic Republic of Ichkeria' (Walker, 1998). It should also be mentioned that ongoing internal conflicts in Afghanistan, led eventually to the establishment of the Taliban regime and its support of terrorists groups. This was the reason for the military invasion by the US-led forces in Muslim Afghanistan in 2001. It was, according to the US political leaders, to respond to the terrorists' attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 on the United States homeland. They believed that the terrorists of Al-Qaeda were being led from their bases in Afghanistan and there must be response by force (Bush, 2001b). Added to this are other civil wars and regional conflicts, a few of which have continued to the present time. Most important of these are: the Kashmir conflict started in 1991, the Algerian Civil War started in 1992, the Somalia Civil War since 1999, the War on Terrorism since 2001, launched by the United States from Afghanistan in 2001 and continued to the war on Iraq in March of 2003, the North Lebanon conflict in 2007, and the 2008 Gaza War and ongoing Arab Israel conflict.

With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Eastern superpower, the third important geopolitical development concerning the Islamic World also occurred. It was related to the emergence of the new states and non-states challengers in the regional and trans-regional scales for the United States as the lone remaining superpower. These challengers later became known as 'rogue states', the 'axis of evil', 'Terrorists groups' and their supporters (Bush, 2002; NSS, 2002). There was an idea that amongst the rogue states countries, which were determined in the late 1990s, there were some declared Islamic states such as Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Syria which were pursuing development of the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and missile systems.

This term was applied officially by President Clinton, when he spoke in Brussels about the present danger of missiles from states such as Libya and Iran (Henriksen, 2001). With the occurrence of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks and defining the 'War on Terrorism' the US geopolitical code of the 'axis of evil' including Iraq, Iran and North Korea was also defined. These states were accused of "(i) their quest to possess 'weapons of mass destruction'-biological, chemical and nuclear; (ii) their hostility to the United States...; and (iii) their alleged support for terrorist groups and other rogue states" (Agnew, 2003, p. 4). Obviously, Iran and Iraq, as two Islamic countries became serious challengers to the United States and separately attempted to create an anti-American front among Arab and non-Arab nations. Introducing Israel as the enemy of the Islam World by both countries had created serious anxieties for the US as the main supporter of Israel. Ultimately, with the establishment of a relationship between terrorism and the Iraqi regime, the regime change was decided by the United States to eliminate Saddam from power. In Iran, however, to control this country and prevent the increase of its power, the US and its allies have attempted to deter Iran from pursuing its nuclear program and these attempts in different ways to pressure Iran took the form sanctions have been continued to date.

Another recent important development is related to the social movements within the Islamic World, in particular the Arab countries, which was called the 'Arab Spring' or 'Arab Awakening'. It began in December 2010 and some countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Bahrain were faced with serious protests and unrests that in some cases led to structural changes in governments which have been continued until today. In Tunisia, its authoritarian president left the country in early 2011 and a first free election was held in October 2011 to introduce and experience democracy. In Egypt, a pro-American regime was changed through a wider protesting movement, while there still are continuing conflicts between security forces and protesters. In Libya, contrarily, one potential anti-American militant leader was killed by revolutionary men and with military intervention of NATO in October 2011. In Syria there are continuing protests to change the existing government (B.B.C News, 2011; The New York Times, 2012).

#### 4.1 Geopolitics of the Islam World and potential capacities

Most of the Islamic countries, geographically, are located on the earth's middle latitudes including 'the heat belt'<sup>3</sup> from Indonesia in South-east Asia to Morocco in North-east Africa. Approximately one-fourth of the world's total population practice Islam. This comprises about 1.57 billion people who are living in more than two hundred countries across the globe. About 95% of the total number of Muslims in the world are living in Asia (with 60%), the Middle East and North Africa (with 20%), and Sub-Saharan Africa (with 15%) while about 3.4% of them in Europe and the Americas. It is interesting to note that although the highest percentage of Muslim majority states are located in the region of the Middle East and North Africa, this region comprises only 20% of the world's total Muslim population. On the other hand, about one-fifth of total world's Muslims (more than 300 million) live in non-Muslim majority countries. In this respect, India, with more than 161 million Muslims has the third-largest Muslim population in the world; Russia's Muslim population is more than the combined Muslim populations of Libya and Jordan, and China's Muslims outnumber those of Syria. It is important to note that between 87 and 90% of all the world's Muslims are Sunni Muslims while about 10-13% of all Muslims of the world are Shia Muslims, with 68 to 80% living in Iran, Pakistan, Iraq and India (Pew Research Center, 2009).

Geostrategically, it is significant to note that three main poles of the Islamic world in south East Asia, the Middle East and North Africa include the most strategic channels and straits, which are the Straits of Malacca between Malaysia and Indonesia, the Hormuz Strait in the midst of the middle-eastern Islamic countries, and the Bab al-Mandeb and Suez Canal in North-east and horn of Africa area, as well as the Dardanelles and Bosphorus straits which are strategic international waterways in Turkey. The strategic role of these marine routes in pursuing strategic goals, international transportation and transfer of goods, as well as crude oil has been so critical that all great powers during the modern world systems have stressed the need to control these points. Basically, it has been noted that controlling marine routes has played a vital

<sup>3</sup>This term adopted from Arthur Jeffery (1958) referring to that geographical area where have mostly been located Islamic countries.

role in gaining a dominant position in global systems within long cycles of world politics. These states are those great powers which have been introduced as world leaders. This happened also in the long cycle of the United States which started in 1945 after the Second World War and has continued to date (Modelske, 1987). Among these regions the Middle East and the Persian Gulf area have always been defined as the vital interests of the US, as was noted in 1980 by the US President that;

“An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.” (Carter, 1980)

This is also because of the massive oil and gas reservoirs in this area which holds about 60% of the total world reserves (Correlje & der Linde, 2006). Furthermore, this region also is the center of the Islam religion and from where Islam has been circulated around the world. These main features have formed two main power resources for the Islamic world which can be discussed within the framework of hard and soft power resources.

#### 4.1.1 Geoeconomics of oil in the Islam World

Most needed oil of the world is exported from the Middle East region which includes most Muslim majority countries too. The only significant international oil organization with 12 members that produces about 40% of the world's oil is OPEC<sup>4</sup>, in which only Venezuela and Ecuador are non-Islamic countries. According to OPEC report, the Islamic countries have produced more than 43% of the world's oil production in 2010 (OPEC, 2011). It is also interesting to note that, according to estimates in 2010 “more than 80% of the world's proven oil reserves are located in OPEC Member Countries” (OPEC, 2012b). In addition, there are a few Muslim countries which are considered as oil producers, but are not members of this organization. Those are countries such as Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia in south-east Asia, and Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, and Yemen, in Central Asia, Africa, and Middle East regions. This is enough to reveal the economic power of the Islamic world in the form of its hard power resource. The significant role of this Muslim area because of oil reserves has led Morrissey (2008) to refer to this area as a ‘geoeconomic pivot’. This geoeconomic area and its hard power resource attracted the serious attention of the great powers to this area to control the oil flow in the context of their global objectives. Amongst them, the United States has always regarded controlling this geoeconomic area (Iseri, 2009; Mercille, 2010). Maintaining its world leadership in the new geopolitical age needs the use of geoeconomic factors and the Persian Gulf area is the most important of them. There is this idea that the US military presence in this region and military intervention in Iraq also are because of oil. This has been used as a hard power to control other great and small states which are either oil consumers or oil producers. Obviously, the Islamic countries in this area and in other parts of the world can use this geoeconomic lever to impose their views on others and dramatically impact the western world like what happened in 1973 with the oil crisis. In this part, there is an active existing organization called OPEC. It is clear that a massive amount of imported oil of the industrial countries comes from the Islamic world's rich oil countries. The Islamic countries produce about 43% of the total world's oil production. It been estimated that the total export of these countries is about 56% of the world crude oil exports (OPEC, 2011), which are consumed by the industrial countries. These all demonstrate the dependency of western industrial countries as well as the United States as the world leader on Islamic states' oil. This high economic and political capacity along with access to the significant strategic chokepoints would strengthen the capabilities of the Islam World to confront the global issues such as world leadership.

#### 4.1.2 International organizations in the Islam World

Although the ‘Hajj Ceremony’ is the largest assembly of Muslims, it is not considered an official organization. It certainly is the largest meeting with about two million participants every year in one specified holy place,

<sup>4</sup>The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) including Algeria, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Angola, Ecuador and Venezuela (OPEC, 2012a).

Mecca. This is a representation of Muslim unity with any orientation including Sunni and Shia. This is an informal organization, but the most important representation of Islam's soft power, in which with deterrence of any conflict the Islam ideology is exlaimed by all Muslims from different geographical points around the world.

Concerning the formal institutions, however, the 'Organization of Islamic Cooperation' (OIC)<sup>5</sup> is the largest international institution in the Islam World, and the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations, in the world. Members of this organization, including 57 countries, believe that this "organization is the collective voice of the Muslim world and ensuring to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various peoples of the world". This political-ideological organization has declared its ideology based on 'international peace and harmony' around the world and emphasizing the encouragement of dialogue among civilizations and religions. It has also stressed the use of peaceful means to settle disputes of member states and deter them from using force in their relations. It was established based "as a result of criminal arson of the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem" on 25 September 1969 (OIC, 2012).

## 5 The Islam World and world leadership

As mentioned, global rivalries have started concerning the redistribution of power in the world among the great powers, in particular amongst Russia, China, India, Japan, and the European Community on the one hand and the United States on the other hand. It is important to note that the US is the only remaining superpower from the Cold War era, as well as the world leader that attempts to preserve its leadership and construct a new geopolitical world order, while others, in particular Russia and China, attempt to challenge the US world leadership. The question is whether the Islam World will be able to appear as a contender for the next world leadership position. To answer this question there is a need to illustrate briefly the Islam world condition. It also is necessary to discuss the leadership in the Islam World as well as describe how the Islamic countries will be able to form one coherent unit to participate in this global rivalry.

### 5.1 Leadership in the Islam World: A collective leadership

This study moves from the geopolitics of segmented Islam World in the global geopolitical context toward the geopolitics of Islam. This study seeks a collective leadership with a spatial geopolitical analysis in a combination of horizontal and vertical layering. This looks to leadership with distribution of responsibilities among potential states according to their geopolitical capacities in the Islamic world. In this view, political units or nation-states are the principle units and in this respect, the capability of each of them fills empty spaces. From this perspective, indeed, other Muslims who are living in non-Muslim majority countries will only play a connecting role amongst Muslim countries. At first glance, the linkage between countries is seen in the shape of an irregular puzzle, in which states with common abilities are located beside each other. This arrangement forms a set of links on a horizontal surface, which constructs the horizontal axis (*Figure 1*).

In this stage, the superior states with more abilities, automatically, rise and gradually there will be some states in layers higher than the rest. Simultaneously, these political units overlap some of their common aspects and in this respect they enjoy a 'depth in power', which includes only some specific aspects of power. Indeed, here are formed a set of thicker layers with common capacities and features, which construct vertical layers (*Figure 2*). In the next stage, a combination of these horizontal and vertical axes forms a few geopolitical axes, which, besides being relevant international institutions will construct the structure of collective leadership in the Islamic world. This structure, with the distribution of responsibilities in ideological, military, and economic spheres will be able to undertake the leadership of the Islam World.

In the process of data gathering and data analysis, however, those countries with Muslim populations of 50% and more are considered Muslim states<sup>6</sup>. The other important geographical elements such as country

<sup>5</sup>This organization was already called 'Organization of the Islamic Conference' (OIC, 2012).

<sup>6</sup>To analyze population of Muslim states it has been used the data offered in recently project under title of 'Mapping the Global Muslim Population; A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population'. For more information

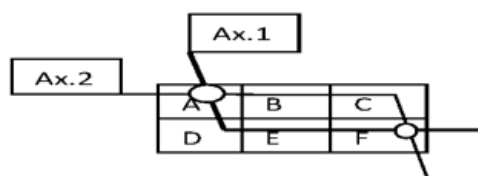


Figure 1: Linkage between countries: irregular puzzle

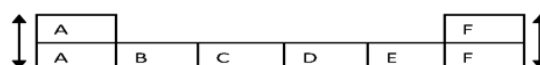


Figure 2: Overlapping political units: vertical axes

size<sup>7</sup>, access to high seas as well as geostrategic dominance over strategic waterways or straits, their military might<sup>8</sup>, and possession of energy reserves as natural resources have also been considered as significant influencing factors in this analysis. In this respect, the Gross Domestic Product's (GDP) real growth rates of each country have also been studied while the GDP per Capita rate has been considered as well<sup>9</sup>. In this analysis, the relevant institutions such as OPEC and OIC, because of their important role in collective leadership and world leadership, have also been considered.

Data analysis resulted in the categorizing of Islamic countries within five main axes: These include economy, natural resources (Geeconomics of oil), ideology, strategic location, and military position. In this respect, their population, country area, and their influences on international institutions also were categorized as complementary factors and the following results were achieved. First, in the economic axis, Turkey, Malaysia and its geopolitical partners Indonesia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan are suggested because the rates of real growth of GDP in these countries have been higher than average rate (about 5%) of Islamic states. In addition, their GDP rates of per capita also have been higher than average rate (about USD 9000) amongst these countries. In this respect, although there are a few countries such as Qatar which have rates much higher than those of selected countries, they are very small countries in terms of population and geographical perspectives. Second, Iran, Indonesia with Malaysia, Egypt, and Turkey have been defined as countries which can get access to high seas, and also have domination over most important strategic waterways across the world, namely Hormuz, Malacca, Suez, Bosphorus and Dardanelles. It is important to note that this axis, along with the military might of these countries will be noticeable, although a country such as Malaysia needs to improve its military power. This is the third axis, in which countries such as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Egypt and Indonesia (and Malaysia) have gained the five highest positions amongst Islamic countries (*Table 1 & 2*).

It should be regarded that, these are placed in a long range and different levels from 6<sup>th</sup> for Turkey to 27<sup>th</sup> for Malaysia amongst the countries of the world. In the ideological axis, there are only Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Egypt. Ideological influences of these countries have rather different origins. Saudi Arabia, certainly, is

see (Pew Research Center, 2009).

<sup>7</sup>Information of countries concerning their area was adopted from CIA-The World Factbook. For more information see (CIA, 2011).

<sup>8</sup>The relevant information about ranking of military position of countries, it was used offering data through GFP-Global Firepower.com. for more information see (GFP, 2012).

<sup>9</sup>These data, concerning GDP real growth rates and GDP per capita rates, were adopted from CIA – The World Factbook. For more information see (CIA, 2011).



known as the center of Islam, where the religion of Islam originated and then was spread. This is the place of the most significance as well as the largest assembly of Muslims who come from all over the world. Egypt also has been known as the center of Islamic knowledge in particular amongst Sunni Muslims.

<b>Economy</b>	Qatar	Turkey	Malaysia	Kazakhstan	Lebanon
<b>Strategic location</b>	Yemen	Iran	Egypt	Turkey	Malaysia, Indonesia
<b>Geoeconomics of oil</b>	Saudi Arabia	Iran	Iraq	UAE	Kuwait
<b>Military might</b>	Turkey	Iran	Pakistan	Egypt	Indonesia
<b>Ideology</b>	Saudi Arabia	Iran	Egypt		

Table 1: Horizontal axes

Iran, on the other hand has its ideological influence amongst Shia Muslims, and has been known as the leader of the anti-American movement amongst Muslims. From this view, indeed, Iran as a Muslim country has constantly acted as a challenge to the US world leadership to date. In the fifth axis, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, and Kuwait are oil rich countries that have enough capability to use oil as a political-economic weapon. This capability is seriously presentable within OPEC with each other and with other members too.

		Geoeconomics of oil		
	Strategic location	Strategic location		Military might
Geoeconomics of oil	Military might	Military might	Strategic location	Strategic location
Ideology	Economy	Ideology	Economy	Ideology
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	<b>Turkey</b>	<b>Iran</b>	<b>Malaysia, Indonesia</b>	<b>Egypt</b>

Table 2: Vertical axes

According to these introductory results, the countries namely Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, and Malaysia (along with Indonesia) emerge as five main first level Islamic countries, which can, with the cooperation of the Islamic international organizations and other Islamic countries construct the main structure of a collective leadership in the Islam World (*Figure 3*).

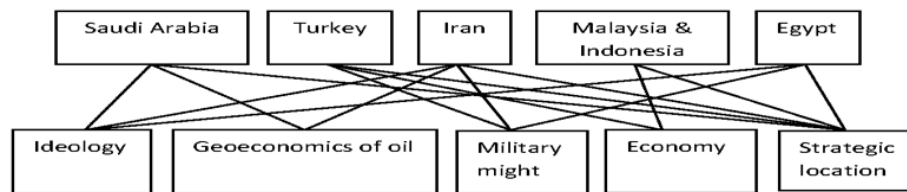


Figure 3: Overlapping political units: vertical axes

## 5.2 The Islam World: an influential actor in the world leadership rivalries

Although the role of the Islamic world in world leadership can be analyzed from different perspectives, here the Islamic world is considered an integrated and coherent unit, almost like what has occurred with the European community. In this politico-economic and ideological unit, as mentioned earlier, a few countries have direct responsibility for the Islam World leadership, particularly in confronting international issues, while other Islamic countries are members of this unit, acting in the framework of Islamic international institutions. Concerning the leadership, Ikenberry (1996) declared that “leadership is the use of power to orchestrate the actions of a group toward a collective end” (p. 388). He also stressed the necessity for projecting a set of political ideas along with power capabilities and material resources for an effective ordering of politics. Here, leadership has a global role and from this perspective, it is related to the ability to

reorganize a new world order, in which according to Cox (1981) there is need for a combination of interacting relations among ideas, material capability, and institutions.

In this respect, this integrated unit will have material capabilities, particularly in terms of oil and gas resources (especially Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, and Iran), a large amount of income due to this natural resource, potential ability to use oil as a geoeconomic factor, a relative military might (Turkey 8th and Iran 12th in the world) (GFP, 2012), an appropriate GDP growth rate in some countries (Turkey 8.2%, Malaysia 7.2%, Turkmenistan 9.2%, Kazakhstan 7%, and so on) (CIA, 2011), ability to influence control of the most important straits, including the noticeable proportion of the world population, a relative geographical integrity in the Islamic World from west Africa to East Asia. In addition, this politico-economic unit enjoys a strong ideology which is derived from Islam. It has been able to create a few regional movements against the current world leader, namely, the United States and its allies. It can be traced in regions such as Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, Egypt, and other regions as well. This is the centralizing point of those scholars who believe in cultural clashes, which was formally stated by Samuel Huntington (1993). The Islamic ideological influence has been so strong that it has been introduced as a potential successor for Marxism-Leninism of the Cold War era, which has been able to mobilize the periphery politically (Flint & Taylor, 2007). From this view, the rise of Islam in this era has been conceived as a global political force, which has shown its ability to mobilize Muslim populations to support Iraq in the Gulf War (Taylor, 1992). This demonstrates the high capacity of the Islam World's soft power, which is capable of filling empty spaces of power in the international scene. This large political, economic, and ideological society has also its international institutions such as OPEC and OIC, and is capable of capturing a main part of the United Nations' capability to resolve international problems. This is a significant feature of great powers being able to resolve international issues (Modelskei, 1978).

### 5.3 Conclusion

The subject of global rivalries to gain the world leadership position has become an important issue for the great powers as well as the commentators who are studying this area. The United States as the current world leader now in its declining phase is attempting to preserve its world leadership position in this era. On the other hand, other great powers namely Russia, China, the European Community, Japan, and India are considered the main challengers and contenders for this position. In this respect, there is no Islamic country able to participate in this competition. As an introductory recommendation, perhaps, this specified unit with a collective leadership and associated with its capabilities may be able to compete in this high level political-economic and ideological rivalry.

## References

- Agnew, J. (2003). *Geopolitics: Re-visioning world politics* (2 ed.). London: Routledge.
- Agnew, J., & Corbridge, S. (1995). *Mastering Space: Hegemony, territory and international political economy*. New York: Routledge.
- B.B.C News. (2011). Egypt violence: Cairo clashes go into fourth day. Retrieved January 1, 2012, from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16243609>
- Bush, G. W. (2001a). Address at Islamic Center of Washington (september 17, 2001). Retrieved September 12, 2011. from <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911islamispence.htm>.
- Bush, G. W. (2001b). Presidential Address to the Nation (October 7, 2001). Retrieved 6/2/2011. from <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011007-8.html>.
- Bush, G. W. (2002). President Delivers State of the Union Address (January 29, 2002). Retrieved 22/9/2010. from <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/01/20020129-11.html>.

- Bush, G. W. (2004). State of the union Address (January 20, 2004). Retrieved 10/10/2010. from <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2004/01/20040120-7.html>.
- Carter, J. (1980). State of the Union Address 1980. Retrieved 17 May, 2010, from <http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/documents/speeches/su80jec.phtml>
- CIA. (2011). Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook. Retrieved 10/1/2012, from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>
- Cohen, S. B. (1991). Global Geopolitical change in the post-cold war era. *Annals of the Association of American geographers*, 81(4), 551-580.
- Correlje, A., & der Linde, C. v. (2006). Energy supply security and geopolitics: A European perspective. *Energy Policy*, 34, 532-543.
- Cox, R. W. (1981). Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory. *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, 10(2), 126-155.
- Flint, C., & Taylor, P. J. (2007). Political Geography: World - Economy, Nation - State and Locality. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Fukuyama, F. (2004). The Neoconservative Moment. *National Interest*, Summer (76), 57-68.
- GFP. (2012). Country Ranks 1 through 30. Retrieved 10/1/2012, from <http://www.globalfirepower.com/>
- Henriksen, T. H. (2001). The Rise and Decline of Rogue States. *Journal of International Affairs*, 54 (2), 349-371.
- Huntington, S. P. (1993). The Clash of Civilizations? *Foreign Affairs*, 72(3), 22-49.
- Huntington, S. P. (1999). The lonely Superpower. *Foreign Affairs*, 7(2), 35-49.
- Ikenberry, G. J. (1996). The Future of International Leadership. *Political Science Quarterly*, 111(3), 385-402.
- Iseri, E. (2009). The US Grand strategy and the Eurasian Heartland in the Twenty-First century. *Geopolitics*, 14, 26-46.
- Jeffery, A. (1958). Islam: Muhammad and His Religion. New York: The Liberal Arts Press.
- Kennedy, P. (1989). The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000. New York: Ronald House, Inc.
- Luttwak, E. N. (1990). From Geopolitics to Geoeconomics: Logic of Conflict, Grammar of Commerce. *The National Interest*, 20(Summer), 17-23.
- Luttwak, E. N. (1993). The Endangered American dream: How to Stop the United States from Becoming a Third-World Country and How to Win the Geo-Economic Struggle for Industrial Supremacy. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Mercille, J. (2010). The radical geopolitics of US foreign policy: the 2003 Iraq War. *Geojournal*, 75(4), 327-337.
- Modelski, G. (1978). The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation-State. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 20(2), 214-235.
- Modelski, G. (1987). Long Cycles in World Politics. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Morrissey, J. (2008). The Geoeconomic Pivot of the Global War on Terror: US Central Command and the War in Iraq. In D. Ryan & P. Kiely (Eds.), *America and Iraq: Policy-Making, Intervention and Regional Politics* (pp. 103-122). New York: Routledge.
- Naji, S. (2004). An analysis of Geopolitics of the greater near east. Tehran: Goharshad.
- NATO. (1999). NATO's role in Kosovo. Retrieved December 25, 2011, from <http://www.nato.int/kosovo/history.htm>

- Nijman, J. (1993). The geopolitics of power and conflict: superpowers in the international system. London: belhaven press.
- NSS. (2002). The National Security Strategy of the United States of America (September, 17, 2002) Retrieved 18/9/2010. from <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/national/nss-020920.pdf>.
- Nye, J. S. (1990). The Changing Nature of World Power. *Political Science Quarterly*, 105(2), 177-192.
- Nye, J. S. (1991). Why the Gulf War Served the National Interest. *The Atlantic Monthly*, 268(1), 56-64.
- Nye, J. S. (2002). The Paradox of American Power: Why the World' Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- O'Hara, S., & Heffernan, M. (2006). From Geo-Strategy to Geo-Economics: The 'Heartland' and British Imperialism Befor and After Mackinder. *Geopolitics*, 11(1), 54-73.
- O'Tuathail, G. (2006). Twenty-first Century Geopolitics. In G. O'Tuathail, S. Dalby & P. Routledge (Eds.), geopolitics reader (second ed., pp. 120-134). New York: Routledge.
- OIC. (2012). Organisation of Islamic Cooperation; about OIC. Retrieved 7/1/2012, from [http://www.oic-oci.org/page\\_print.asp?p\\_id=52](http://www.oic-oci.org/page_print.asp?p_id=52)
- OPEC. (2011). Annual Statistical Bulletin 2010-2011 Edition. Retrieved 16/11/2011, from [http://www.opec.org/opec\\_web/static\\_files\\_project/media/downloads/publications/ASB2010\\_2011.pdf](http://www.opec.org/opec_web/static_files_project/media/downloads/publications/ASB2010_2011.pdf)
- OPEC. (2012a). Member Countries, Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. Retrieved 5/1/2012, from [http://www.opec.org/opec\\_web/en/about\\_us/25.htm](http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/25.htm)
- OPEC. (2012b). OPEC Share of World Crude Oil Reserves. Retrieved 19/1/2012, from [http://www.opec.org/opec\\_web/en/data\\_graphs/330.htm](http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/data_graphs/330.htm)
- Pew Research Center. (2009). Mapping the Global Muslim Population; A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population. Washington, D.C.: Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life.
- Taylor, P. J. (1992). Tribulations of Transition. *Professional Geographer*, 44(1), 10-13.
- Taylor, P. J. (1993). Geopolitical world orders. In P. Taylor, J (Ed.), *Political Geography of the twentieth century: A Global Analysis* (pp. 31-61). London: Balhaven Press.
- Taylor, P. J. (2004). God invented war to teach Americans geography. *Political geography*, 23, 487-492.
- Taylor, P. J., & Flint, C. (2000). Political Geography: World - economy, nation - states and locality (fourth edition ed.). London: Pearson education.
- The New York Times. (2012). Tunisia. Retrieved January 1, 2012, from <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/tunisia/index.html>
- Walker, E. W. (1998). Islam in Chechenya. Retrieved December 25, 2011, from [http://iseees.berkeley.edu/articles/walker\\_1998-islam.pdf](http://iseees.berkeley.edu/articles/walker_1998-islam.pdf)
- Wallerstein, I. (1984). The Politics of The World-economy: The States, the Movements and The Civilizations. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wallerstein, I. (2003). US Weakness and the Struggle for Hegemony. *Monthly Review*, 55(3), 23-29.