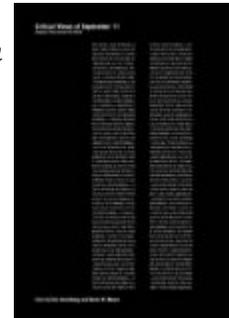




Eric Hershberg, Kevin W. Moore, eds.. *Critical Views of September 11: Analyses from Around the World*. New York: The New Press, 2002. viii + 304 pp. \$18.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-56584-771-2.



Reviewed by James Carafano

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After September 11--More Observations than Insights

This book deserves to be read, though perhaps not for the reasons intended by the editors. *Critical Views of September 11: Analyses from Around the World* provides a wide-ranging collection of views interpreting trends in international relations and global conditions in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on Washington, D.C., and New York City. But rather than interpreting the events of 9/11 and their impact on the world, these essays appear to be more restatements of preexisting opinions and standing hypotheses, well formed before the hijackers picked up their boarding passes. Far less intellectual effort appears to have been dedicated to rethinking assumptions of how events on a clear September morning may change mankind's future course. Readers seeking innovative, critical research on this historical moment and its potential impact will probably need to look elsewhere. On the other hand, this collection represents a superb historical snapshot of the diversity of views about

America and its place in the world at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

The thirteen essays in the book represent an assemblage of intellectuals from different disciplines and every continent (Australia and Antarctica excepted), writing on a diverse collection of topics, including domestic security, terrorism, globalization, international relations, economic liberalism, imperialism, and social and cultural change. All of the articles were penned in the period from the 9/11 attacks to the onset of operations in Afghanistan.

Contributors to this collection include Achin Vanaik, Mahmood Mamdani, Luis Rubio, and Didier Bigo on terrorism; William Wallace, Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira, and Kanishka Jayasuriya on international relations; Kamran Asdar Ali, Said Amir Arjomand, Francisco Gutierrez Sanin, Eric Hershberg, and Monica Hirst on regional reactions from Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America; and Tariq Modood, Riva Kastoryano, and Wang Gungwu on religion and politics. The writers are thoughtful scholars, though not the usual list of academic talking heads that populate the

airwaves and editorial pages. If for that reason alone, this collection is worthwhile. Fresh voices are a welcome addition to the debate.

Despite the wide range of topics and perspectives there are a few remarkable commonalities in these essays. The first is how often Samuel P. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996) is singled out as a touchstone for debate. Huntington's hypothesis is that in the post-Cold War world global politics are multi-polar and multi-civilizational and that dangerous conflicts will emerge between peoples belonging to different cultural entities. As the West asserts its global influence, Huntington contends, it will do battle with Confucian and Islamic societies attempting to counter with their own economic and military power. The authors by and large are suspect of Huntington's thesis (see, for example, pp. 35, 44, 66, 78). Luis Rubio, for one, contends "that the clash and confrontation is less among civilizations than within them.... the Islamic world is besieged by conflict" (p. 67). Despite this fact, Said Amir Arjomand argues, Islamic fundamentalists have embraced Huntington, quoting a Turkish editorial: "We have not as yet witnessed a full clash of civilizations in the concrete, though the events of September 11 constitute the beginnings of such a concretization" (p. 172). Both Rubio and Arjomand seem to miss a central tenet of Huntington's argument. *The Clash of Civilizations* does not necessarily see Islamic fundamentalism as a coherent, competitive alternative to Western modernity. Islamic peoples are a threat not because they are united, but because they are divided and chaotic and thus a potential source of trouble (p. 173). Unfortunately, beyond perhaps agreeing with the notion that the world is not divided into monolithic blocs, there is not much new here on the controversy over Huntington's ideas.

A second point on which the essays appear to share a common frame of reference is their view of America's place in the world. "To say that the

United States is an 'imperial' power," the editors purport, "is not to take an ideological, polemical, or controversial position; it is simply to state a fact" (pp. 2-3). Indeed, envisioning the United States as a hegemonic power or an outright empire seems to be a common assumption held by many of the book's contributors. A frequently expressed fear in *Critical Views of September 11* (see, for example, p. 6) is that the post-9/11 United States has elected foreign policy initiatives that are increasingly strident and unilateral.

In entering the debate over American foreign policy, the contributions in this collection join a discourse on the interplay between U.S. power and globalization that has become increasingly heated since the end of the Cold War. There is, in fact, little academic consensus on the place of America as a world power. For example, in opposition to the general view expressed in *Critical Views of September 11*, other research, such as Andrew J. Bacevich's *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), finds little new or remarkable in America's post-Cold War foreign policy. Historically, Bacevich argues, the United States has never loathed using armed force to spread its power, interests, and values. America's exercise of power is habit, not choice he contends. The real issue, Bacevich argues, is whether the United States will continue to exert influence episodically and indirectly or if it will elect to conduct protracted "hot" wars and long-running occupations to secure American predominance in global affairs.

On the other hand, neither *American Empire* nor *Critical Views of September 11* give much weight to the arguments against viewing the United States through an imperial prism. Propositions running counter to the idea of American empire are too easily dispatched. Alternative worldviews deserve closer consideration. For example, the U.S. economy is neither independent nor monopolistic. It has increasingly become only one link in

the global economic system with the United States dependent on other nations and transnational corporations (which it does not control) for goods and services that are critical to the U.S. economy. America cannot be both imperial and dependent. As Joseph E. Stiglitz famously argues in *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002) world economic policies cannot be run by "Washington Consensus" doctrines (pp. 20, 67, 81). Even if it wished to pursue a totally unilateral foreign policy Washington could well find such initiatives untenable over the long term if they have significant adverse consequences on the global economy.

On the other hand, it is also far from clear that Americans want, would tolerate, or even need an empire. For example, Joseph S. Nye, in *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), contends that the United States's preponderance of "soft" power, including diplomatic, cultural, and political instruments, makes the notion of maintaining an imperial system not only unnecessary, but illogical (pp. 8-9).

A third point on which these essays seem on common ground is their anticipation of a backlash against U.S. counterterrorism efforts in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. Developing a balanced strategy is the greatest challenge of competing over the long term. On this point, the United States has come under criticism on every front. Detractors describe U.S. military efforts as rash and likely to create as many enemies as they destroy. The United States is also accused of suppressing civil liberties through the Patriot Act, while supporting authoritarian regimes abroad. Meanwhile, critics claim U.S. economic policies exploit the developing world, feeding rather than combating the conditions that breed terrorism.

But predicting such a wave of anti-Americanism is a small achievement. Criticism of American activism is hardly a new phenomenon. It is worth

noting that much of the post-9/11 down-with-the-U.S. rhetoric is grist from the same mills that were hypercritical of the United States before the attacks on Washington and New York. Thus, for example, it was hardly surprising to see intellectuals like Noam Chomsky and Edward Said leading the charge against Uncle Sam and the CIA.

The real question is what to make of it all. It is, for example, unclear that America is as deeply resented as some suggest. For example, President Bush received more jeers than cheers on his November 2003 trip to Great Britain, but polls revealed that most Englishmen still think America is a force for good in the world.

At the same time, Islamist terrorism is not directed primarily against the United States. The Saudi, Turkish, and Egyptian governments are also high on the hit list. Nor are terrorist threats limited to the Middle East. Regimes from Africa to Indonesia are under the gun, to turn a phrase. While the Bush administration's critics would like to argue that the war on terrorism is simply a case of Washington against the world, the reality is more complex.

It is difficult at this point to argue where the balance of global views will pivot. Some backlash of global public opinion is to be expected. It is too early to tell whether current harping against the United States is right or relevant. Accusations of heavy-handedness emerged periodically during the Cold War as well. Yet in the end, few would argue that the Soviet Union was on the right side of history.

Even if the authors of *Critical Views of September 11* are wrong, as during the Cold War, the United States and its friends and allies will have to continually both take and explain their actions to a concerned world. Here, as this work amply demonstrates, there is much work to be done.

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