ISLAM IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
POLITICS AND PARADIGMS

Edited by
Nassef Manabilang Adiong,
Raffaele Mauriello and Deina Abdelkader
Islam in International Relations

*Islam in International Relations: Politics and Paradigms* analyses the interaction between Islam and international relations (IR). It shows how Islam is a conceptualization of ideas that affect people’s thinking and behaviour in their capacity to relate with IR as both discipline and practice. This approach challenges Western-based and defined epistemological and ontological foundations of the discipline, and by doing so contributes to worlding IR as a field of study and practice by presenting and discussing a broad range of standpoints from within Islamic civilization. The volume opens with the presentation and discussion of the international thought of a major Muslim leader, followed by a chapter that addresses the ethical practice of IR, from traditional pacifism to modern Arab political philosophy. It then switches to applying constructivism as a tool to understand Islam in world affairs and proceeds to address the issue of how the ethnocentric approach of Western academia has hindered our understanding of world affairs. The volume moves on to address the ISIS phenomenon, a current urgent issue in world affairs and closes with a look at Islamic geopolitics.

This comprehensive collection will be of great interest to students, scholars and policy-makers with a focus on the Muslim world.

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Historically, the International Relations (IR) discipline has established its boundaries, issues and theories based upon Western experience and traditions of thought. This series explores the role of geocultural factors, institutions and academic practices in creating the concepts, epistemologies and methodologies through which IR knowledge is produced. This entails identifying alternatives for thinking about the “international” that are more in tune with local concerns and traditions outside the West. But it also implies provincializing Western IR and empirically studying the practice of producing IR knowledge at multiple sites within the so-called West.

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4. Panel at the XII Conference of the Italian Society for Middle Eastern Studies held on 16–17 January 2015 in Venice, Italy.
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1 Analysing and theorizing Islam and IR

Non-Western international relations and geocultural epistemologies

Nassef Manabilang Adiong, Raffaele Mauriello and Deina Abdelkader

The chapters in this volume address the issue of Islam and International Relations. They provide a detailed picture of the different ways in which it is possible to study the interaction between the Islam – broadly defined as a history, a people, a religion, an intellectual tradition, and the like – and International Relations (IR) as a discipline.

It is well known that the sources of IR conspicuously fail to correspond to the global distribution of its subjects and that there is a necessity to diversify the discipline – in particular as regards theoretical questions and debates – by using the experience and intellectual history of non-Western regions and intellectual traditions (in our case the Islamic civilization) to both build and locate gaps within existing IR literature, in particular its theories and paradigms (Acharya and Buzan 2010; Abdelkader, Adiong and Mauriello 2016). The essays presented here identify patterns and experiences that differ from those of Europe and North America and can enrich the field of IR and help explain – or at least better understand – events and phenomena at the local, regional/civilizational levels. They can be placed within the scope of post-colonial IR in that they do not aim to replace current Western-centric IR with non-Western IR but to offer an expanded and enriched IR that accounts for the diversity of worldviews and perspectives on world affairs (Biswas 2016). In this respect, our efforts as researchers help in providing the South, in general, and Muslims, in particular, with a voice as actors and agents on the international platform.

In 2013, Hamid Dabashi asked the question, Can non-Europeans think? He was appalled by the universality and “global claims” of continental (European) philosophy while those from Asia, Africa or Latin America are called “ethno-philosophies.” Dabashi (2013) poignantly writes:

The question is rather the manner in which non-European thinking can reach self-consciousness and evident universality, not at the cost of whatever European philosophers may think of themselves for the world at large, but for the purpose of offering alternative (complementary or contradictory) visions of reality more rooted in the lived experiences of people in Africa, in Asia, in Latin America [...]
In retrospect, we may also ask how do we theorize the “international”? Is there a matrix that affects one’s theorizing skills, particularly the individual’s view of the world? Is theory always for someone and for some purpose? (Cox 1981). We always speculate things and observe phenomena. We postulate the supposition of ideas to explain something we are curious about or account for situations we desire to provide justifications for. A theory may have four properties: it describes, explains, interprets and predicts phenomena. These properties are manifested in both American and European IR theory traditions. In most American IR traditions, positivistic theorizing efforts are conditioned by setting out their operational terms, presenting their causality and generating testable hypotheses. In European IR, a theory is, on the other hand, generally understood in a reflective manner where general structuring or specific questions are organized and systematically produce a coherent set of interrelated concepts and categories.¹

From the perspective of application-level theorizing, the chapters prove the worthiness of using the local Muslim contexts as a ground for testing existing theoretical approaches and, in some respects, go beyond this by implying the possibility to elaborate Islamic paradigms of IR. In this respect, Acharya and Buzan (2010: 10) indicate that “it is possible for non-Western societies to build understandings of IR based on their own histories and social theories, and even to project these in the form of universalist claims.” They further contend that theory basically reflects a simplified reality where unique identification of events can be congregated altogether to share essential homogeneity (Acharya and Buzan 2007: 287–312). They provide conditions on which non-Western theorizing can be considered as IR theory, and these are

1. extensive acknowledgment as a theory by IR scholars, identification as IR theory by its creator regardless of non-recognition by mainstream academic IR community, or a systematic attempt to theorize IR which provides possible starting points.

(Acharya and Buzan 2007: 292)

Current IR gravitates around a number of theories and paradigms made in the US and, to a lesser extent, Western Europe. The domination of Western IR theory is still prevalent because of five dimensions: (1) the systemic understanding of issues and affairs worldwide; (2) the successful linkage of (Western) historical past to (Western) present continuity; (3) (Western) hegemonic experience of colonizing the global South through incomparable military strength; (4) (Western) vast resources in finances, research institutes, universities, think tanks and scholarships, among others; and (5) the poor conditions of non-Western academic IR communities including cultural and linguistic hindrances. This condition persists despite the fact that Arlene B. Tickner and Ole Wæver (2009) noticed how

the study of various “third world” contexts has led to claims that key IR concepts, including the state, self-help, power, and security, do not “fit” third world realities and may not be as relevant as others for thinking about the specific problems of such parts of the world…. IR knowledge is shaped by the privileging of the core over the periphery and the formation of key concepts based solely on core perspective.

The statement by Wæver and Tickner is based on the findings of an academic effort centred on “geo-cultural epistemologies in (or end of) IR.” The work they carried out is very relevant to this
volume, as it is the question of whether or not IR is the local product of a particular geo-
epistemological perspective. If this is the case, there ensues the need to address the role of geo-
cultural factors in representing certain epistemological perspectives. A relevant difference 
between this volume and Tickner and Wæver’s research lies in that here we are not interested in 
the sociological dimension of Muslim scholars working within the clearly unbalanced core–
periphery structure of IR as a social world – that is in terms of sociology of science – but, rather, 
in the intellectual dimension of Islam as a viable source for tools of analysis and of the Islamic 
civilization as a valuable object of enquiry for the IR discipline – that is in terms of 
epistemology/theory of science and philosophy of science.²

Before surveying the corpus of Islamic historiography in International Relations, it is worth 
tackling one aspect of Islam that has befuddled IR scholars for several decades, that is the role or 
correlation of “religion” with modern and contemporary IR.
Religion and international relations

In the past few decades there has been a tremendous increase of IR scholars that study religion, and a dedicated section called REL (Religion and International Relations) was established at the International Studies Association in 2013. Prior to this, there were similar sections, committees and caucuses that focused on religion and politics in major international associations: the International Political Science Association, the American Political Science Association and the European Consortium for Political Research.

It is without a doubt that the literature on IR and religion rapidly proliferated after the tragic 9/11 terrorist attack in the US. Several scholars are talking about the “global resurgence of religion” or the need to “bring religion back into IR from its exile.” Was religion really in exile? How come IR scholars are recently paying attention to it? How do IR scholars see religion in their analyses? Is there a possibility of integrating religion into IR?

There is no common understanding of the meaning of religion in the social sciences, theology or philosophy. Haynes (2013: 33–34), quoting Martyr, identified five features of religion: it “(1) focuses our ultimate concern, (2) builds community, (3) appeals to myth and symbol, (4) enforced through rites and ceremonies, and (5) demands certain behaviour from its adherents.”

Religion can also be thought of as a belief system that is mutually supported by practices and oftentimes related to adherence to supernatural beings or “being” held as sacred to a society or number of persons. It is surprising that almost all major religions share a symmetrical view of transcendental reality. For example, sociologists of religion instigated that the practice or thought of creating or constructing a sanctified being, sometimes characterized with supernatural abilities, is universal to all human civilizations that date back to antiquity, particularly in West Asia or the (modern) Middle East region. In Kubálková’s (2000: 684) words,

theologians, of course, deny that God (or the gods) are human constructions. They might accept that the human being is homo sapiens but they would contend that he or she is also homo religiosus, a species in need of finding a system of beliefs essential to the self-definition of the believer, what we now call “identity.” All religions are organised on the basis of beliefs that are fundamental not only to reality, but even more important to human identity.

While theologians contend the homo religiosus nature of human beings, at the other spectrum social scientists raise the aspect of the homo politicus. Religion and politics are intertwined since humans became aware of the transcendental and supernatural. Oftentimes religious explanations are the result of political situations and of political life. Hurd (2015) argued that

religion cannot be disembedded and isolated from the broader social and political fields... There are no untouched religions waiting to be recovered from political irrelevance or reformed into peaceable governing partners.
According to the Scholars of the Critical Religion Association⁴ religions are actually modern inventions that are made to appear ubiquitous – they are present everywhere – and have been marginalized and privatized because they were construed only to serving the mystification of the (supposed) natural rationality of the secular (e.g. the modern nation-state and the capitalist system). This reified religion represents the so-called “resurgence,”⁵ “return from exile,” or “bringing back” religion in the world of social sciences we find in IR literature. There, religion is treated as if it had distinct properties and characteristics that cannot be the subject of empirical investigation and analysis or as a variable to be observed.
Religious roots of IR

It is argued that modern IR is rooted in the European experience of the Reformation era, which consequently led to the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia. Those actors or agents who acted upon the Reformation are the same actors who created the Westphalian system. There are two components to this argument: first, that the Reformation accounted for the origin of Westphalia because of the similar authoritative structure of the system of sovereign states. In Philpott’s (2000: 207) words, “International Relations scholars have long granted that a state system exists and have sought to theorize its laws and patterns of war, peace, and commerce.” Second, the Reformation warrants the “recognition as a kind of historical cause that merits more attention in the international relations literature” (Philpott 2000: 208). Going back to historical accounts, during the Reformation, in 1517 the monarchies of Britain, France and Sweden dominated political domains over the church, and Italy even had a system of sovereign states. In addition, the 1555 Peace of Augsburg had provisions authorizing German princes the free will to establish their own faith in territories they owned. This accounts for the famous saying *cuius regio, eius religio* (whose realm, his religion; Philpott 2000: 211).

Philpott (2000: 214) strongly argued that a system of sovereign states would not have developed had the Reformation not occurred. It was truly through the Reformation that these transnational actors, including the church, developed an interest and curiosity in the idea of sovereign nation-states. The church was losing its political power, its territories and its properties were confiscated and the temporal authority of the pope and of the emperor was truncated and transferred to the modern state. All in all, religious powers and influences succumbed to the dominance of the secular state. In other words, the theology of Christianity’s Reformation and the conceptual notion of territorial sovereignty are intrinsically and historically connected. Those polities who were interested in the sovereign state system were also those who adopted Protestantism as their official religion or faith.

Religion is seen by IR scholars as either important or tangential, but most of the time the latter prevails, particularly after 9/11. Internationally, religion is treated as an opposing form of epistemic communities, that is non-governmental or trans-national organizations/entities. However, religion can be a distinctive subject matter in IR because “it brings into IR issues of norms, values and beliefs that go beyond the traditional secular concerns of international relations” (Haynes 2013: 23). One way of looking at IR scholars’ neglect of the importance of religion in the analysis of the “international” is from the perspective of the staunch influence of Enlightenment thinkers onto IR scholars and the Western (Anglo-American and European) experiences of secularization, the nation-state system and modernity, which have relegated religion into a state of oblivion and self-privatization. More so, even IR theoreticians have excluded religion from their theoretical analyses and methodologies (Fox and Sandler 2004: 163).

The rejection (or negligence) of IR scholars with regards to the importance of religion stems
from the following points: First, most secular social sciences, particularly IR, have a history of rejecting religion on the basis that analyses of state relations and behaviours can only be accounted for through basic rational and logical explanations and not (irrational) religious analyses. Second, the dominance of positivist and behaviouralist traditions, that IR adapted, made religion difficult to operationalize. For example, IR scholars who utilize quantitative analysis usually ignore religion as a type of variable because it is very hard to measure. Last, IR scholars do not know how to deal with, address or treat religion whether they aim to integrate it into IR theories or build new theories to accommodate religion. There is somehow a hope that with the proliferation of IR scholars interested in religion, there might be a possibility in the near future that IR may develop an adequate theoretical understanding of religion concomitant with its resurgence in world affairs. Finally, although most contemporary IR scholarship looks at religion as a variable operated and perceived to have a preponderating link with conflicts, including its ontological predicament as to its nature and existence, the case of Islam may serve to address religion’s “ambiguity,” especially its correlation with IR.
**Islamic views of the “international”**

There are conflicting readings between and among Muslims’ and Europeans’ experiences regarding the elements of polity (i.e. nation-state) and the tools/frameworks (i.e. constitutional cases) of societies in the international system. The study of Islam may help explore ways in IR theorizing that deal with contemporary global issues such as the legitimacy of power, conflict, peace and human rights. Those topics lend themselves to Islam and its practice thus connecting and integrating it within the boundaries of IR theory.

There is a propensity for thinking, or even rethinking, of Islam within the boundaries of IR theory, much less as a theory in its own right. Most of the literature produced especially after 9/11 sees Islam as only a factor to be understood in relation to existing IR paradigms, thereby neglecting its comprehensiveness as a knowledge system. On the other hand, scholars such as AbuSulayman (1993) attempted to make the study of “international” purely Islamic through reference to theological prescriptions from the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. However, so far IR theorizing efforts for using an exclusivist Islamic lens has arguably failed to build a cohesive and systemic Islamic theory of IR. These lenses always fall into discourses on political thought and theology (*kalam*) that are primarily concerned with relations (*siyar*) between Muslims and non-Muslims and the jurisprudential boundaries of Islamic and non-Islamic territories, including permissible (*halal*) and forbidden (*haram*). In 1981 a group of Muslim scholars established the International Institute of Islamic Thought, giving birth to the “Islamization of Knowledge” movement that further marked Islam as antithetical to the contemporary structure of IR.

The proliferation of normative interpretations of the international in Islam exacerbated its universal claims. Religious ideals and values that would apply to the social world do not systematically analyse the complexity of IR. The applicability of these normative explanations may refer to the theological legitimacy of the international and the appropriation of the West in terms of sectarian or cultural conflicts and ethnic or national differences. Regardless of varying differences, these approaches are Islamic in that they engage with the sources of Islam (the Qur’an and Sunnah). According to Turner (2012: 12), however,

> Islamic International Relations is not a concept of how states interact with each other but, rather, a concept of world order that focuses on the relations between the Muslim and the non-Muslim spheres.

This line of thought is intellectually uncomfortable because the premise is that Muslims have their own version of world order which primarily focuses only on relations between Muslims and the Other. In fact, it echoes an Orientalist pejorative clamour. If the international system is based only on the interaction between Muslims and the Other, then it is automatically assumed that Islam holds a universal message and values which consequently marginalize non-Muslims.

These contestations on the prospect of delineating boundaries of the *ummah* (loosely
understood as the Muslim community) creates ambiguity in the development of a cohesive Islamic IR. On the other hand, Turner adamantly points out that Islam must not be seen as a subject matter but as an outstanding paradigm of IR. According to him (Turner 2012: 14), there are three key principles in Islamic IR according to (1) the state and sovereignty as embodied by the ummah or oneness of the community that is linked by asabiyyah (loosely understood as “solidarity”), (2) the inside/outside domains of the dar al-Islam (abode of Islam) and dar al-harb (abode of war) and in-between domain of dar al-sulh or dar al-ahd (the abode of covenant or agreement) and (3) the ontological belief in God, the revealed message (Qur’an) and the tradition of the Prophet based on his sayings and practices (Sunnah). Some scholars say that ijtihad (independent qualified judgement in matters of Islamic law), which is practised by a trained scholar with knowledge of the primary texts (the Qur’an and Sunnah), can also be a source of knowledge.

In contemporary Islamic thought, the centrality of ummah is prevalent. According to (a slightly modified version of) Turner (2012: 13), there are some prevalent approaches to understanding the ummah and Islamic IR:

1. Classical/Traditional/Conservative/Fundamentalism
2. Reformist/Progressive
3. Revolutionary/Puritanical/Salafi-Jihadist
4. IIIT’s “Islamization of Knowledge” movement
5. Civilizational Islam

**Classical/traditional/conservative/fundamentalism**

This is somehow related to classical realism. It is characterized by the belief that the ummah negates the legitimacy of the territorial sovereignty of nation-states. The Westphalian system is antithetical to their worldview of what should constitute a desirable Muslim socio-political system. It envisages a pan-Islamic system that promotes an endless perpetual conflict of the “abode of Islam” and the “abode of war.” The argument is that the pre-Islamic era was one of jahiliyyah (ignorance) and that security was acquired after the people converted or reverted to Islam. Jihad (generally understood as “struggle”) determines the success, sustenance and progress of Muslim societies. This line of thinking adheres to the idea that God is sovereign and that the Prophet, caliphs and state leaders are bestowed by God to govern and lead the Muslim world.

**Reformist/progressive**

This school of thought promotes the virtue of cooperation with non-Muslims, adaptation to the nation-state system, and engagement with modernity. The ummah’s division between two abodes is a thing of the past and has no significance to the modern-day structure of IR. It is imperative,
therefore, to establish transnational institutions that advance connections through international or regional organizations such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Muslim World League and the Islamic Development Bank, among others. Its adherents believe in cooperation with non-Muslims. They do not subscribe to the inside/outside territorial domains perspective because this approach is a product of a specific epoch and circumstances. They also accept the nation-state system because they view the *ummah* as a theoretical/metaphysical concept that goes beyond real territorial boundaries. They differ from traditionalists/conservatives in terms of methodology. They regard *ijtihad* as a legitimate source of knowledge especially in dealing with matters that are not covered by the Qur’an and Sunnah. However, the process of *ijtihad* must be guided by the primary sources. An example of reformists is Muhammad Abduh, a student of al-Afghani.

**Revolutionary/Puritanical/Salafi-Jihadist**

Reformists use *ijtihad* in order to engage with modernity guided by a selective number of classic commentaries of the Quran and the Sunna. Salafists, in fact, do not recognize the works of major classical ulema (such as al-Farabi, al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, ibn Khaldun, etc.). To the Puritans, mainstream classical ulema are perpetrators who corrupted the true and pure essence of Islam. One of the first Salafists was Ibn Taymiyyah, followed by Abd al-Wahhab. Turner (2012) also lists in this group figures such as Maududi, Syed Qutb, al-Banna, Khomeini and others who more correctly represent “nationalists” who fought against colonial invasions, although in some cases their radical outlook and otherization has inspired people to take arms and join radical or extremist movements such as al-Qaeda and ISIS/Daesh.

**IIIT’s Islamization of knowledge movement**

This was pioneered by American Muslim scholars, particularly Ismael al-Faruki, under the tutelage of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). Its adherents promote the universality and supremacy of Islamic moral teachings and intellectual legacies over Western social sciences. According to al-Faruki, the aim of the Islamization of Knowledge is

> to redefine and reorder data, to rethink the reasoning and relating the data, to re-evaluate the conclusions, to reproject the goals – and to do so in such a way to make the disciplines enrich and serve the cause of Islam.

(Tadjbakhsh 2010: 182)

**Civilizational Islam**

There is no consensual singular understanding of (Islamic) “civilization” among Islamicists (here...
understood as “jurists and scholars”). Each has his or her own view and perception regarding this concept, but they all agree that the persuasive message of Islam has highly affected the socio-political developments and multicultural cohesion of individuals and human societies where Islam has played an important role in the intellectual and economic spheres. Currently, this approach is represented, in particular, by Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (Malaysia), Muhammad Khatami (Iran) and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Turkey). This civilizational approach to Islamic IR is exemplified by the work of the following authors (Adiong 2017: 297–302):

1. Ibn Khaldun’s *asabiyyah* of civilization
2. Malek Bennabi’s definition of civilization
3. Mohammad Hashim Kamali’s middle grounds of Islamic civilization
4. Recep Şentürk’s Islam as an open civilization
Islam and IR, a brief look at historiography

Looking at the study of the interaction between Islam and IR in the international academic scene, a turning point was represented by the publication of the first edition of *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, by Majid Khadduri; published first in England in 1941, a fully revised edition of the volume appeared in the US with John Hopkins University Press in 1955. A year later, in 1942, the first edition of *The Muslim Conduct of State*, by Muhammad Hamidullah, appeared in Lahore (India).


A further important step in the study of Islam and International Relations in academia was represented by a conference held at Duke University, in the US, in 1963 that brought together twenty-six scholars to discuss this topic. The results of that meeting were published just a couple of years later by Frederick A. Praeger, in a volume edited by J. Harris Proctor titled *Islam and International Relations*. It is not by chance that the contribution on “The Islamic Theory of International Relations and its Contemporary Relevance” was authored by Majid Khadduri (1965: 24–39).

Khadduri continued his research on the topic and in 1966 published a translation of Muhammad al-Shayhani’s *Kitab al-Siyar al-Saghir*, under the title *The Islamic Law of Nations: Shaybani’s Siyar*. For good or for bad, the two volumes by Professor Khadduri set the stage for the study of IR and Islam, taking the place of unavoidable and undisputed references to the issue.

It is worth quoting at length an important conclusion reached by Khadduri that we find in the introduction to *Shaybani’s Siyar* (1966: 8), where he states that

> [t]he Islamic law of nations, or the siyar, as an integral part of Islamic law, was based in theory on the same sources and maintained by the same sanctions of that law. In practice, however, if the term siyar is taken to mean the sum total of the principles, rules, and practices governing Islam’s relationships with other nations, one should look for evidence beyond the conventional roots (usul), or sources, of Islamic law. Some principles and rules may be found in treaties and peace agreements made by Muslim rulers with non-Muslims; other in public utterances and official instructions of the caliphs to commanders in the field which the jurists subsequently incorporated in the law; still others in the rules and practices necessarily evolving from
reciprocity and mutual relations with other nations or derived from Islam’s direct experiences with neighbouring countries.

Then, in 1987, AbdulHamid A. AbuSulayman went a step further, publishing his PhD thesis, under the title of Towards an Islamic Theory of International Relations: New Directions for Methodology and Thought, with the IIIT and within the project movement known as “Islamization of knowledge.” This work puts theorizing centre stage. Relying mostly on sources of Islam, AbuSulayman explored a “world order” purely based on an Islamic perspective and introduced a methodology by combining some approaches of classical Islamic methods and Western social sciences.

A few publications addressing the issue of Islam and IR in English followed, among them worth mentioning is Alternative Paradigms: The Impact of Islamic and Western Weltanschauungs on Political Theory (1993), the PhD thesis of Ahmet Davutoğlu, former foreign minister and prime minister of Turkey. An article, “Theory of International Relations in Islam,” by Labeeb Ahmed Bsoul, published by the Digest of Middle East Studies in 2007, concentrated mainly on the territorial nexus between the jurisprudential abodes of Islam and war. In 2009, an online essay by John Turner titled Islam as a Theory of International Relations? appeared in the e-IR website. Turner described various approaches on how Islam is used in transnational and global events especially in the study of global terrorism. An initial effort by Nassef Manabilang Adiong, who tried to provide a more nuanced approach to Islam and IR, appeared in his 2013 edited work International Relations and Islam: Diverse Perspectives. More recently, two volumes stand up, Faiz Sheikh’s PhD thesis, published as Islam and International Relations: Exploring Community and the Limits of Universalism (2016), and Islam and International Relations: Fractured Worlds (2017), by Mustapha Kamal Pasha. In his thesis, Sheik argued for the tenability of an Islamic notion of IR but restricted by the Western construct of abstract reason, territorial rule and the vagueness between religious and secular. His division of Islam-as-faith and Islam-as-politics is central to his thinking of exoteric principles of community of believers (or umma). While Sheik argues for a limitation of Western IR’s hubris of universalism, Mustapha Kamal Pasha thinks that “the orientalist apprehension of Islam is central to the self-construction of IR” (Pasha 2017: 26). The orientalist “Othering” of Islam and Muslims seen by Western IR scholars has cemented the way people think about Islam’s influence and impact on the international system. Pasha explains this as a support to his argument that political Islam is indeed a product of modernity.

The most sustained and first collective effort to put forward a structured, worldwide and integrative approach to the theme of Islam and International Relations was undertaken in 2013, with the establishment of the International Relations and Islamic Studies Research Cohort, also known as Co-IRIS. In 2016, the first co-edited volume of this project was published under the title of Islam and International Relations: Contributions to Theory and Practice. The present edited volume represents the second co-edited outcome of this collective effort, presenting some of the best essays presented at panels and sections organized by Co-IRIS.
The chapters

The volume opens with an indigenous voice from the Muslim world, one that addresses the ethical practice of International Relations. In their chapter titled “The Khamenei Doctrine: Iran’s Leader on Diplomacy, Foreign Policy and International Relations,” Seyed Mohammad Marandi and Raffaele Mauriello address the international thought of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, former president (1981–1989) and current leader (1989–onwards) of the Islamic Republic of Iran. They present and discuss Khamenei’s political language as regards international relations and diplomacy, delineating his general principles of foreign policy and his views on the major courses underlying Iran’s foreign affairs. In this respect, the chapter’s basic premise is that Islamic thought can be utilized to construct legitimate modern knowledge with regards to international affairs practices. In terms of methodology and scope, it advances interdisciplinary research between the fields of IR and Islamic Studies, with the declared aim of developing and sustaining inter-cultural knowledge that can help address the theories and practices of Muslim societies with regards to international affairs and the discipline of International Relations.

Mohammed Hashas, in his chapter titled “The Arab Right to Difference: Taha Abderrahmane’s Concept of the Awakened Youth and the Formation of Modern Arab Nationhood,” introduces and analyses Taha Abderrahmane’s contribution to the formation of modern Arab political philosophy. The author describes how the philosopher builds his project of renewal, known as Trusteeship Paradigm, on a call for a “double awakening”: philosophical and political. The author describes how Abderrahmane contends that at the heart of any genuine renewal is the question of ethics that touches the individual human being before it reaches society at large. The Moroccan philosopher builds on the classical Arabo-Islamic tradition to speak of the “awakened youth” as the highest level of ethical practice that can lead to such an awakening or revolution. The chapter reads this concept in light of the Arab Spring, with a focus on Morocco.

It is a common misunderstanding that Islam and pacifism are incompatible. Using a traditionalist approach to religious issues, in his chapter on “Reconciling Islam and Pacifism: A Traditionalist Approach,” Muhammad Haniff Hassan seeks to construct arguments in opposition to such assumptions. He argues that Islam and pacifism can be compatible at three levels: international, national and individual. Based on the arguments put forth, Haniff asserts that the issue of pacifism should not be restricted to the issue of halal (permissible, i.e. upholding commandment of jihad) versus absolute haram (forbidden, i.e. denial of jihad obligation) where there is disagreement it is permissible to “agree to disagree” like in many other religious issues.

The following three chapters switch to applying constructivism as a tool to understand Islam in world affairs. In her chapter on “Constructivism in the Islamic Approach to International Relations: Davutoğlu and Qutb as Case Studies,” Shaimaa Magued employs constructivism main components, collective identity, common interest, shared knowledge and practice in understanding IR reality from an Islamic perspective. She does so by highlighting how Alexander
Wendt and Emmanuel Adler’s theoretical foundations built an Islamic episteme in world politics. It analyses how Sayyid Qutb and Ahmet Davutoğlu’s political Islamic thought and operational concepts of “al-hakimiyya” and “alternative paradigms” provide, unlike previous attempts of theorization, an Islamic IR theory that interacts with the existing body of Western theories. They both provide a different understanding of the Muslims’ worldview, particularly on its ontological foundations and concrete application to international affairs.

IR often depicts “Islamist” actors as a threat to the existing world order. While scholars have criticized this view in recent years, the question of how “Islamist” actors discursively construct and relate to the liberal world order has yet to be investigated. In her chapter on “Beyond Terrorism and Disorder: Assessing Islamist Constructions of World Order,” Hanna Pfeifer argues that we have to understand world order as plural discourses on sovereignties, legitimacies and teleologies. In her chapter, she develops the concept of sovereignties further to show how even within “Western” discourse this notion is contested and elaborates on how this can methodologically be used to assess connectivity and conflict with “Islamist” discourses on world order.

Since 1979 Iran’s religious state identity has oscillated between conservative and moderate interpretations of Islam. According to Farhood Badri, these shifts in framing the state identity constitute post-secular struggles for discursive hegemony. Following a constructivist approach, in his chapter on “Struggling for Post-Secular Hegemony: Causal Explanations for Religious Discrimination in the Islamic Republic of Iran,” Badri asks how these post-secular struggles affect non-Muslim religious minorities. Their varying discrimination cannot be explained solely from a rational-choice perspective. Quantitative research provides evidence for both rational-choice and identity-related explanations for religious discrimination. However, there is a need for an in-depth and context-specific analysis of causal factors. A qualitative within-case analysis illustrates how the post-secular struggles for discursive hegemony can help explain the different degrees to which non-Muslim religious minorities are persecuted.

The next two chapters address the issue of how the ethnocentric approach of Western academia has hindered our understanding of world affairs and whether or not there is a difference between Islamists and non-religious political actors with regards to foreign policy. The West has viewed itself throughout history as a self-referential entity, ostensibly unique in world history. As such, it has depicted Islam as an easily identifiable subject with an itemized list of maladies and has thus prescribed solutions and reforms for it. However, all societies throughout the world are connected by a shared human web of interaction. In this chapter on “Belying the Human Web: Western Perceptions of Islam and the Danger of a Single Story,” Nicholas P. Roberts argues that the methods many Western analysts use when studying phenomena throughout the world are deeply flawed because they fail to account for the ideas or actions of the West as causal factors in creating, sustaining and shaping the very phenomena under study.

The fact that several political Islamic movements have seized power over the last few years has raised the issue of how they conduct foreign policy. In his chapter on “Foreign Policies of Political Islam Movements: Of the Use and Reconstruction of an Ideological Reference,” Mohamed-Ali Adraoufi asks to what extent can we consider Islamists different from non-religious political
actors. According to the author, the basic Islamist actors’ worldview is focused on two key elements. The first is the revisionist iterations of political Islam which might be potentially deviant as they evolve over time. Adraoui writes that it is apparent with Islamists’ sociological changes in their accession to political power regardless of geopolitical matters. The second element concerns the possibility of reshaping political Islam where radical counter-revolutionary forces subsist.

The volume moves on to address a current urgent issue in world affairs, the ISIS phenomenon. Amidst the conflicts that arose because of ISIS in the Middle East, one has to question how such a movement is organized and what are its goals. In her chapter on “The Geopolitics of the Wahhabi Movement: From the ‘Neglected Duty’ to Daesh,” Deina Abdelkader raises an important question: Where does ISIS’s ideology and thus legitimacy stem from? ISIS’s ideological lineage is important because it lays the foundation for further research that ties repression with extremism. There are four ideological stages that Wahhabism has gone through: from the politicization of its original ideology under Muhamed Ibn AbdelWahab till modern times. This politicization has led to the current radicalization of such groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS. This chapter examines, in particular, an individual case of “jihad” exemplified by AbdelSalam Faraj, the different stages of ideological transformation that Wahhabism has gone through and how ISIS exemplify a group that espouses those ideas.

In their chapter on “The Islamic State’s Notion of ‘Mobile’ Sovereignty/Territoriality in a Post-Secular Perspective,” Marina Eleftheriadou and Sotiris Roussos argue that the so-called Islamic State constitutes a hybrid formation that overcomes the dichotomy between the secular and the religious by exploring the strategy of military conquest, administrative consolidation and territorial expansion of the IS. The authors claim that, contrary to the Habermasian Western vantage-point views of post-secularism as a normative problem-solving process – which would lead to a peaceful inclusion of religion into a secular society – IS’s post-secularity – and, particularly, its notion of “mobile territoriality” – appropriates and transforms secular structures and idioms, in order for the religious to become translatable to various sections of the society.

The volume closes with a look at Islamic geopolitics. In his chapter on “Towards an Islamic Geopolitics: Reconciling the Ummah and Territoriality in Contemporary International Relations (IR),” Jason E. Strakes examines the gradual redefinition and adaptation of spatial dualism by clerical and political elites that, he argues, has occurred alongside the evolution of the modern post-colonial state, particularly in North Africa and the Middle East. The chapter draws, on one hand, on the territorial classification system produced by the Sunni and Shia schools of Islamic jurisprudence and, on the other, on the concept of “buffer spaces” developed by contemporary Iranian scholars of geopolitics to identify variations in the definition of boundaries within and between Muslim and non-Muslim populations as manifest in the physical territory. These are applied in order to generate a theoretical framework for modern geopolitical analysis that is compatible with Islamic interpretations of world politics.
Co-IRIS, envisaging the “Islam and IR” project

In the introduction to their co-edited volume, Acharya and Buzan (2007) raised the question of why there is no non-Western international relations theory. In the chapter dedicated to “International Relations Theory and the Islamic Worldview” within the same volume, Tadjbakhsh raised another relevant question: whether students of IR can use the Islamic world and “the Islamic worldview” as a basis for generalizations that can provide alternative optics for theorization. Once we assume that Islam can indeed help us put forward these alternative optics, the other, attendant question would be how Islam has constructed or can construct its own vision of international relations and whether that can contribute to theorization. Tadjbakhsh concludes that, as a worldview and as a cultural, religious and ideational variant, Islam has sought a different foundation of the “good life” and that this can be studied and theorized on to put forward alternatives to Western IR theory.

Scholars who aim to include Islam in IR should address the theories and practices of the Muslim civilization and of Muslim societies with regards to international affairs and to the discipline of IR. In order to present an Islamic viewpoint, one needs to work on the conceptualization of ideas that affect people’s thinking and behaviour. In this framework, Islam should not be conceived and studied simply in terms of theology but, rather, analysed also from viewpoints that engage with a wide range of analytical tools, in particular those offered by the Social Sciences and Islamic Studies. The primal goal of an Islamic paradigm/approach to IR should be to critically engage with the established Western-based and -defined epistemological and ontological foundations of the discipline, substantially contributing to the worlding of IR as a field of study and practice. This should be attained by presenting and discussing a broad range of standpoints from within the Islamic civilization and the Muslim world and by offering critical analyses regarding current Muslim affairs.

In the wake of the Cold War, some political analysts assumed that the new threat to national security would be Islam. However, when one looks at the facts one realizes that Islamic opposition movements (violent and non-violent) started as early as 1928 with the foundation of the Muslim Brotherhood. In more recent times, the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979 dramatically increased research interest in the role of faith in the public sphere in the Muslim world. Since 1979, the interest in researching the nature of opposition in Muslim nations have grown exponentially, and the signing of the Oslo agreement gave rise to an interest in what the future of the Palestinian state would look like given the popularity of Hamas. In this mood and before the rise of al-Qaeda and the attack on 9/11, the focus moved to analysing politically active Islamist groups.

Co-IRIS focuses on research that concentrates on the faith and its followers without seeking exceptionalism or cultural relativism as a core concept in its analysis and contribution to the field. Although there is undeniable research of the past historical examples of the faith and its
followers, Co-IRIS feels the need to clarify those historical instances because of the current politicization of Islam and Muslims. Therefore, the lens with which Co-IRIS looks at those historical examples is a lens that delineates historical facts from the current political discourse. The second problem that Co-IRIS tackles is the constant analysis of current events on the international level. For example, in this volume the reader will find that four chapters analyse different Islamic politically active groups. Those chapters identify how certain groups act on the international and national levels using ideologies and tactics to either play a profound role in public policy through proper political channels, like the Muslim Brotherhood in the 2012 elections, or that through acts of violence, like ISIS.

Co-IRIS therefore has a dual role, one, which is historically reflective, that tries to extract theory and praxis in Muslim societies across time which therefore act as precedents. The second is the analysis of contemporary Muslim societies and transnational organizations to explain the ideological and conceptual frameworks utilized for political action. Therefore, questions about implementing democratic practices in contemporary Muslim societies take centre stage or questions around the ideological lineage of groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS are also an essential component of Co-IRIS’s contribution to Islam and IR.
Notes

1 This observation does not discount the important differences noted within European IR communities as regards approaches to International Relations Theory (Friedrichs 2004).

2 See the discussion in Wæver and Tickner (2009: 10–11).

3 Fitzgerald (2011: 6) described the lay understanding of religion “as a universal and distinct kind of human practice and institution. Though it is frequently (though not always) defined by ‘belief in the supernatural’, religion is generally seen as a natural aspect of human experience and action. Also, religion in general has some problematic relationship to religions in particular. These ‘religions’ have been set up in modern discourse as things that exist in the world, things which belong to a general class but each with their own essential characteristics.”

4 A group of scholars critical to the conceptual of religion: http://criticalreligion.org/scholars/.

5 Goldewijk (2007: 23) argued that “the global resurgence of religion demonstrates religion’s involvement in global and local integration as well as in conflict and fragmentation. It expresses the globalization of religions and a growing interconnectedness, while it simultaneously shows that religion, violence and conflict are closely intertwined in world affairs today. Integral part of the resurgence is a counter-tendency towards a growing involvement of religions in conflict: in intrastate conflicts, local ethnic conflicts, wider identity conflicts and other complex emergencies.”

6 Fox (2006: 1062) argued that “the core of Western IR theory as we know it today, especially American IR theory, evolved from national security theories which focused on the Cold War, a competition between two secular ideologies. In addition, the peace of Westphalia ended the era of international religious wars in the Christian West and the defeat of the Ottomans at the gates of Vienna in 1683 ended the Muslim threat to the West. Thus, centuries of Western historical experience reinforced the notion that religion was not relevant to the relations between states.”

7 Petito and Hatzopoulos (2003: 1) argued that “the rejection of religion, in other words, seems to be inscribed in the genetic code of the discipline of IR. Arguably, this occurred because the main constitutive elements of the practices of international relations were purposely established in early modern Europe to end the Wars of Religion.”

8 On this project, see Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan, 3rd edition, revised and expanded, International Institute of Islamic Thought, Herdon (Virginia, U.S.) 1997.
References


The Khamenei Doctrine

Iran’s leader on diplomacy, foreign policy and international relations

Seyed Mohammad Marandi and Raffaele Mauriello
Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the international thought of arguably the most remarkable Muslim political figure of the last four decades: the former president (1981–1989) and current leader (1989–onwards) of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. In terms of methodology and scope, it follows into the footsteps of the International Relations and Islamic Studies Research Cohort (Co-IRIS) project of advancing interdisciplinary research between International Relations (IR) and Islamic Studies with the aim to develop and sustain inter-cultural knowledge that addresses the theories and practices of the Islamic civilization and of Muslim societies as regards international affairs and the discipline of IR (Abdelkader, Adiong and Mauriello 2016). In this respect, the chapter’s basic premise is that non-Western (Islamic) thought must be considered as a source through which it is possible to construct legitimate (modern) knowledge, in our case as regards international affairs.²

Ayatollah Khamenei has received sporadic and exclusively scathing attention by the Western media and academia.³ His profile on the BBC website describes him as “Iran’s ‘unremarkable’ supreme leader” (Reynolds 2011), and in the same vein, S. Zubaida described Khamenei as someone who “lacks charisma and religious authority and is an ordinary politician” (Zubaida 2009: xiii). Moreover, in 2009 K. Sadjadpour affirmed that under Khamenei’s leadership, “a fundamental shift in Iranian domestic and foreign policy is unlikely” (Sadjadpour 2009: 30). However, a political and religious life at the head of the IRI spanning more than three decades in addition to the agreement reached between Iran and the 5+1 in July 2015 – from which the US withdrew in May 2018 – together with Khamenei’s capacity to lead the Islamic Republic out from international isolation and onto centre stage at the regional and international level indicate that these assumptions were at best misplaced, if not misconceived. This chapter looks beyond this narrow perspective offering a more scholarly account on the international thinking of Ayatollah Khamenei. It presents and discusses his views on diplomacy, foreign policy and international relations through the analysis of the political language used in his speeches, and in this respect, the analysis offered in this chapter follows the approach put forward by Bernard Lewis (1988). The basic assumption of the chapter is to present an accurate reflection of his views on the aims and actions of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In this last respect, even harsh critics of Iranian politics and foreign affairs have pointed out that Khamenei has always spoken with conviction and that “he believes in what he says” (Sadjadpour 2009: 23).

The main source for the speeches and statements delivered by Ayatollah Khamenei is the leader’s website (leader.ir) and publications by the Mu’assase-yi Pajuhishi-Farhangi-yi Inqilab-i Islami (Research-Cultural Institute of the Islamic Revolution), the institute officially entrusted with the collection and publication of the current leader’s speeches and works.⁴
Ayatollah Khamenei’s biography in a nutshell

Seyed Ali Khamenei was born in Mashhad on 16 July 1939, the second of eight children. Together with two of his brothers he followed the career of his father, studying as a religious scholar (‘alim or ruhani) in the local hawza ‘ilmiyya, the centre for religious learning. In 1957, he went to Najaf, where he stayed for some months, attending the classes of the most-renowned local scholars. In 1958 he then moved to Qom, one of the main centres of Islamic learning in the world, to study with some of the foremost scholars of his time. There, in 1962, he joined the opposition movement to the Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi led by his mentor, Ayatollah Seyed Ruhollah Khomeini. In 1964, he left Qom and went back to Mashhad to take care of his ailing father. Nevertheless, he continued to play an active role in the political opposition to the shah and was consequently jailed six times. Khamenei was to play an important role in the 1979 revolution that resulted in the exile of the shah, the end of the monarchy and the establishment of an Islamic Republic in Iran. During the early years of the Islamic Republic, he served in the assembly that drafted the new constitution of the country, was elected to the first parliament formed under this constitution and to the Assembly of Experts of the Leadership (Majlis-i Khubrigan-i Rahbari), was appointed leader of the Friday prayer in Tehran and member of the Council of the Islamic Revolution by Ayatollah Khomeini. In addition, he served as deputy defence minister, acting chair of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Khomeini’s representative in the Supreme Defense Council. Then, in 1981 Khamenei was elected Iran’s president, a post he held from 1981 to 1989. On 4 June 1989, following the demise of Ayatollah Khomeini, he was elected leader (Rahbar) of the country, a position he still holds today. Khomeini is fluent in Farsi, Azeri, Arabic and English.
Khamenei’s general principles of foreign policy: wisdom (hikmat), dignity (‘izzat) and expediency (maslahat)

In Ayatollah Khamenei’s view, the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic must be based on three general principles: wisdom (hikmat), dignity (‘izzat) and expediency (maslahat). The leader particularly emphasized the central role of these principles on 28 December 2011, within the framework of a long message addressed to senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁶ There we read,

The fact that people imagine that if we [use our] spiritual values as a criterion [for conducting our foreign policy] [then our] diplomatic work will reach a dead end is an error; it won’t reach a dead end. It is possible to enter the diplomatic arena, to be active [in it], [and] to make efforts [in it] while preserving these very values, insisting on these very principles; and [it is possible to] let logic (mantiq) rule and [therefore] bring our different counterparts little by little and gradually close to our own positions. When I said “dignity (‘izzat), wisdom (hikmat), expediency (maslahat),” by wisdom (hikmat) I meant [precisely] this. Wisdom (hikmat) is the fact that you can, acting with wisdom (hakimane), [let] the positions of the counterpart approach your own positions; these [three principles] are not in contrast with one another. Wisdom (hikmat), dignity (‘izzat) and expediency (maslahat) complement one another. You must follow the orientation of [our] national interests and this must, in the first place, go hand in hand with the preservation of [our] national dignity (‘izzat) and of the dignity of [our] identity. That is to say that surrender and the acceptance of oppression should not take place either as regards the beliefs of your heart or as regards [your] activities and agreements (qarardad); this would not be compatible with wisdom (hikmat). Sometimes it is possible to dispute, to be embittered and to be vehement; and this can sometimes be useful. However, this is not the general pattern. The general pattern is wisdom (hikmat). Wisdom (hikmat) means entering the diplomatic arena with logic (mantiq) and dignity (matin).
Hikmat – wisdom

The word *hikmat* (*hikma* in Arabic) comes from a root with a very high occurrence in the Quran, Muslims’ holy book and their foremost reference and source for meaning in every aspect of life, where the origins of Islamic political language must be sought (Lewis 1988: 6). As a noun (*hikma*), it appears in Quran 4: 113, where we read,

> And God has sent down upon you the Book and the Wisdom (*al-hikma*), and taught you that which you did not know.

(Badawi and Abdel Haleem 2008: 228; parenthesis added)

This word occurs repeatedly in Khamenei’s speeches. On different occasions, he has also given a detailed delineation of his personal understanding of it, as in the following statement:

> Wisdom (*hikmat*) means work based upon logical calculations, the establishment of strong foundations, walking in level playing fields, and the avoidance of any form of imprudence, ignorance, and vainglory.

(Khamenei 1992)

Khamenei considers *hikmat* – wisdom – as a way of reaching one’s goals through the use of knowledge and reason and thus it should be assumed that, in applying it, diplomats and policymakers must also take into account the issues of faith (*iman*), spirituality (*ma’naviyat*) and justice (*‘idalat*) (Khamenei 2015). In this respect, in one of his speeches he stated that

> [t]he Islam we support and encourage is based on the three principles of spirituality, reason, and justice and it is completely different from reactionary Islam or liberalism.

(Quoted in Marandi 2011; speech given on 16 August 2000)
The word ‘izzat (‘izza in Arabic) comes from a root with a very high occurrence in the Quran. As a noun (‘izza), it appears eleven times with the meaning of “feeling proud of,” “power, support” and “glory, exaltation.” More generally, in Persian ‘izzat can have both the positive meaning of “respect,” “dignity” and “self-esteem” as well as the negative meaning of “pride” (Aryanpur Kashani 1391/2012–2013). Khamenei seems to undoubtedly privilege the former over the latter, pointing out that in his view, ‘izzat (dignity) comes not through pride and arrogance but from having faith in God, being kind to God’s creations and people and serving them (Marandi 2011). In a speech given on 6 August 1996, he affirmed that

[i]f the Islamic Republic wants to safeguard its dignity (‘izzat) and life it is necessary [for us] to show firmness in response to their [i.e. our counterparts] increasing demands and excessive requests. Therefore, side-by-side with diplomacy, there is this fundamental principle; and this is precisely the thing that if it happens becomes the source of discomfort [for our counterparts].

(Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 36)

Moreover, Ayatollah Khamenei has clearly stated how the principle of dignity (‘izzat) is by its very nature opposed to allowing oppression to take place and, in terms of foreign policy, to being oppressive to other nations or peoples. According to this view, the very identity of a nation or a people is determined by how they act in relation to the struggle between dignity (‘izzat) and oppression. In effect, the struggle between dignity (‘izzat) and oppression, or between oppressed and oppressors, is a key component of IRI foreign policy and international relations outlook (Mauriello and Marandi 2016: 50–71).
Maslahat – expediency

The word *maslahat* (maslaha in Arabic) comes from a root with a very high occurrence in the Quran, with meanings that fall into the semantic field of “good” and “virtuous”; “to be fit, or, suitable”; and “reconciliation.”\(^{10}\) The word *maslahat* itself, however, never occurs in the Quran. Moreover, the very principle of expediency (*maslahat*), in particular as elaborated in the constitution and jurisprudential praxis of the IRI, is to a significant extent new to Shi‘i politics and governance.\(^{11}\) We find the word *maslahat* in art. 110 of the Constitution of the IRI within the name of the institution that is entrusted with providing support to the leader in determining the general policies of the country, the Council for the Discernment of the Interest of the System\(^{12}\) (*Majma-i Tashkhis-i Maslahat-i Nizam*). The understanding of the word *maslahat* as regards the Islamic Republic comes directly from the words of the late founder of the republic, Ayatollah Khomeini, in connection with the formal integration of *maslahat* (expediency, interest) within the legislative mechanism of the state – and the subsequent establishment of the Council for the Discernment of the Interest of the System (Ghamari-Tabrizi 2008: 144–150). In a letter sent by Khomeini (at that time leader of the IRI) to Khamenei (at that time president) as regards the possibility of suspending Islamic ordinances (*ahkam-i far‘iye*) on the basis of the principle of interest/expediency (*maslahat*), the former affirmed that the Islamic state is a branch of the absolute trusteeship of the Prophet… and constitutes one of the primary ordinances of Islam [which] has precedence over all other derived ordinances, such as prayer, fasting and pilgrimage.

(Quoted in Shirazi 1998: 213; parenthesis in the original)

This means that, in Ayatollah Khomeini’s view, the Islamic state can go beyond the strict and limited provisions historically elaborated by Muslim scholars and found in classical Islamic law and basically introduce any law that it deems of interest/expediency (*maslahat*) for the (Islamic) state. Ayatollah Khamenei has underlined the important role of the principle of interest/expediency (*maslahat*) since the time of his early tenure as president of the Islamic Republic. In a speech given on 3 November 1984, he affirmed that

> [i]n [our] relations with other countries we have to thoroughly observe the interests (*masale*, pl. of *maslahat*) of [our] country. Sometimes it is possible that these relations are against the sentiments that a person can feel within himself. [However,] it is necessary to ignore these sentiments and stick to the path of logic (*mantiq*) and correct wisdom (*hakimane*).

(Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 31)

Finally, it should be born in mind that, in the current leader’s view, expediency (*maslahat*) is part of the overall path based on wisdom (*hikmat*) and dignity (*‘izzat*) followed by the Islamic Republic and not a principle to be valued *per se.*
Khamenei’s guidelines for Iran’s foreign policy: general policies

When analysing Ayatollah Khamenei’s speeches, we find the delineation of a set of general policies that he sees as underlying IRI foreign policy: non-alignment, pursuit of national interest, détente and rejection of weapons of mass destruction.

Neither East nor West (Nah Sharqi va nah gharbi): non-alignment

Since the beginning of its existence, the IRI has been strongly committed to what students of IR call “balancing.” Ayatollah Khamenei sustained the centrality of this principle during his tenure as president (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 49; speech given on 4 October 1983) and upheld it soon afterward taking office as the leader, as exemplified by the following speech delivered on 22 August 1989:

The political principle and foundation “Neither East nor West” (Nah sharqi va na gharbi) is safeguarded. On the basis of this principle, our policy will not be subjected to any group, neither eastern nor western, and this is part of our principles and foundations; and in this respect there isn’t any doubt or change. This is not simply a policy, but the basis of our system (nizam), which is moreover not in contradiction with [having foreign] relations. Gentlemen, do follow this orientation and consolidate [our foreign] relations on the basis of Islamic thinking, belief and way.

(Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 35)

According to F. Leverett and H. Mann Leverett (2013: 30), this position was developed in relation to two factors: the opposition between two highly antagonistic blocs during the Cold War and the decision made by the Iranian government to balance against the US instead of jumping on the bandwagon with it, following its rise as the only world power.

Pursuit of national interest (manafi’-i milli)

Ayatollah Khamenei has pointed out how the national interest (manafi’-i milli) of Iran must be assessed on the basis of the changing needs of the country and not necessarily stick to those necessities defined during the early days of a post-revolutionary and freshly established state. In a speech given on 18 August 2002, he pointed out that

[t]he determination of our priorities on the basis of [our] national interest must change regularly. The priorities that we determined at the beginning of the Revolution as regards our [foreign] relations were in accordance
with the national interest (manafi’-i milli) of those days. It is possible that today our national interest (manafi’-i milli) requires something else. We should not bind ourselves hand and foot asserting that, [because] at a certain time we for example stated that our relations with Africa were part of our priorities on the basis of our national interest (manafi’-i milli), today we have to stand by it; no, this can be re-evaluated and examined. The priorities of [our] foreign policy and of [our] diplomatic relations have to be described on the basis of our national interest (manafi’-i milli). Of course, [this should happen] within the parameters of our system of values, and not outside of it.

(Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 43)

It is interesting to notice how, on one hand, Khamenei has always reiterated that the foreign relations of the IRI are underpinned by intellectual, revolutionary and Islamic bases, and on the other, he has also stressed that these bases do not represent an impediment to the pursuit of the essential goals aimed at by any state through its diplomatic means, that is the satisfaction of the basic needs of the country – be they economic, political, technical or scientific. This behaviour is, in the Ayatollah’s view, linked to the fact that countries (and people) cannot live by themselves but are instead naturally inclined to establish relations (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 30–31; speech given on 6 August 1984).

**Détente (tashannuj-zudai’i)**

The leader has stated on different occasions that the IRI should pursue a foreign policy based on détente (tashannuj-zudai’i). He has, however, also pointed out that there are some exceptions as regards this attitude. In a speech given on 16 August 1999, he stated that

[a]s regards the issue of détente (tashannuj-zudai’i), we announced it as part of our general policies. We are convinced of [the necessity of] détente (tashannuj-zudai’i). However, détente (tashannuj-zudai’i) with whom? Not with the Zionist country, the basis of whose existence we do not accept. Certainly, it was not us who created tension. More than by us, it was [created] on their part. They are [those who] threaten the existence of an Islamic power, they [are those who threaten a country] whose policy has been based on retrieving Islamic power. This is a perennial threat [for them]; that is, our [very] existence threatens them not our behaviour. On the other hand, détente (tashannuj-zudai’i) is not towards the US either, because the issue between the US and us is not an issue of détente (tashannuj-zudai’i).

(Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 38)

Moreover, the leader has pointed out that the pursuit of a détente-oriented foreign policy should not be in breach of well-argued rational dignified policies developed by the IRI (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 39; speech given on 16 August 1999).

**Rejection of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)**

Several international affairs observers have noticed how Ayatollah Khamenei has repeatedly and
consistently denied that the IRI has been pursuing the development or possession of a nuclear bomb. He has actually emphasized that he rejects the development of WMD in general. In a message to the International Conference on Nuclear Disarmament held in Tehran on 17 April 2010, he stated,

We believe that besides nuclear weapons, other types of weapons of mass destruction such as chemical and biological weapons also pose a serious threat to humanity. The Iranian nation which has been itself a victim of chemical weapons feels more than any other nation the danger that is caused by the production and stockpiling of such weapons and is prepared to make use of all its facilities to counter such threats. We consider the use of such weapons as forbidden by Islamic law (haram) and believe that it is everyone’s duty to make efforts to safeguard humanity against this great disaster.

(Khamenei 2010)

This clear and unquestionable condemnation of WMD, be they nuclear or chemical, is of particular relevance because it is not simply an impromptu statement but is considered by Khamenei as a veritable fatwa in his function as a religious scholar qualified to derive legal norms from the sources of law (mujtahid) and therefore duly inserted in the section of his official website containing his other fatwas (istifta’at).

Over the years Ayatollah Khamenei has been very consistent in condemning all kinds of WMD, as shown by the following statement which he made earlier in his tenure as leader:

Contrary to the enemy’s propaganda and racket, we are not seeking nuclear weapons. And we are fundamentally and morally opposed to WMD – in the same way that we considered chemical and biological weapons as forbidden, even at the time of the imposed war (referring to the 8-year Iran-Iraq war).

(Quoted in Lotfian 2008: 165; emphasis added, parentheses in the original)

He more recently reiterated this legal-religious judgement by affirming that

[f]rom an ideological and legal (fiqhi) perspective, we consider developing nuclear weapons as unlawful. We consider using such weapons as a big sin.

(Khamenei 2012)

The influence and importance of his position in terms of foreign policy are clearly illustrated by the decision of the Iranian negotiation team to include his “nuclear fatwa” among the core legal documents related to the country’s civil nuclear programme.
Khamenei’s guidelines for Iran’s foreign policy: key players, regions and issues in world politics

In order to offer a more concrete grasp of Ayatollah Khamenei’s views on the IRI foreign policy orientation, in this section we present case-by-case samples of important statements made by the leader as regards key players, regions and issues in world politics: Europe, the US, Asia, Africa, the Arab uprisings and Palestine.

**Europe: a long history of relations**

Ayatollah Khamenei’s interest in enhancing Iran’s relations with Europe has been consistent over the years. In a speech given on 18 November 1997/27 Aban 1376, the leader affirmed that

> [w]e have to deepen [our] relations with Europe; [although] in the form and at the price that is right for us, and not at any price. [However] if they want to abuse [our] fundamental values and words, in that case [the strengthening of relations] would not satisfy us, but someone else.

(Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 37)

In another speech delivered three years later, on 15 August 2000/25 Mordad 1379, he added that

> [w]e have to make [people] understand that the West is not equivalent to the US. [In this respect,] we have to strengthen our relations with Europe.

(Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 37)

It is worth mentioning that in this, as in other cases, he, however, cautioned Iran’s diplomats pointing out that

> [o]f course, [our] [diplomatic] relations with Europe should be [carried out] taking into account their diplomatic manoeuvres. As I have already pointed out, they use threats, bribes, intimidation, and sometimes they [even] commit acts of duplicity. We have to be aware of them. This means that we have to be vigilant when dealing with them.

The leader’s will to build strong relations with Europe is particularly directed at a number of European countries that have a historical and consolidated relation with Iran, such as Italy, France, England and Germany. This relationship even predates the establishment of the Islamic Republic and is seen by Khamenei as being as important as those established with the European Union. In this respect, on 18 August 2002/27 Mordad 1381, he stated,

> I am convinced that if we can, apart from the European Union, establish closer relations with influential
European countries, this improvement would be to our [own] advantage. Now the European Union is also a reality, [...]. However, this is not an impediment to establishing closer relations with those European countries that are able to have more relations with us. We can find common points [of interest] with France that we do not find with England. We can find common points [of interest] with Italy that we do not find with any other European country. Why shouldn’t we use these possibilities? This is also the case with some other European countries, smaller countries such as Austria, Spain and others. Therefore, engaging with Europe and Asia is definitely one of our priorities. Needless to say, also those countries that have the power of influence in the international arena are one of our priorities.

(Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 29)

The US: hegemony and arrogance (istikbar) 19

A fundamental document regarding Khamenei’s position towards the US is represented by the speech he delivered in New York in 1987 in a session of the UN General Assembly.20 At that time he was Iran’s president, and this is his only trip to date to the US. The ayatollah addressed at length the relationship between his country and the US. Of particular relevance is a passage where Khamenei listed some of his country’s grievances towards the US:

A big chapter of our history, a very bitter, bloody and evil chapter, is saturated with American enmities and grudging hostilities towards our nation; some 25 years of support for the Pahlavi butcher and dictator, complicity with the Shah in all his crimes against our people, participation in plundering the wealth of the nation, serious confrontation with our revolution in the month of the Shah’s régime [sic], persuading the dictator to suppress the millions-strong demonstrations of our people, employing all sorts of means and devices to obstruct the path of revolution in the first years of our victory, the constant, provocative contacts of the United States embassy in Tehran with counter-revolutionary elements, continuous help and assistance to terrorists and counter-revolutionaries outside Iran, freezing of the people’s assets and property, non-deliverance of commodities that had been already paid for, non-payment of assets taken from the public treasury by the Shah and deposited in his own name in American banks, efforts for an economic blockade of Iran and the formation of a united Western front against our people, flagrant and affective support of Iraq in its war against us and now the bullying of illogical tactic of throwing an American armada into the Persian Gulf and seriously endangering peace and tranquillity of the region. These are parts of our nation’s indictment against the United States administration [...].21

Over the years the leader has time and time again made reference to his strongly critical position as regards the US, describing its government – but not its people – in the most negative terms, with the use of words such as *taghut* (idolatry/disobeying the rule of God/Satan/illegitimate ruler),22 *istikbar-i jahani* (world or global arrogance/imperialism) and *sult-e-yi jahani* (world hegemon) and letting the motto “death to America” (*marg bar Amrica*) thrive both during his presidency and leadership. In this last respect, however, in a speech given on 16 August 1999/25 Mordad 1378, he interestingly mentioned that the reason for US enmity *vis-à-vis* Iran lies not in this motto – or more generally in the strong language used by most of Iran’s politicians towards America – but in the economic success of the Islamic Republic and its being a role model for other countries (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 38–39), implying that this motto has no value *per se* and...
perhaps hinting at the possibility of avoiding its use once US hostile policies against the IRI are redressed.

Whatever the profound differences between the US and the IRI, it is worth keeping in mind that, when it comes to the US, Khamenei has said that his views are based on a concrete political assessment of the former open enmity towards his country and that, despite being explicitly sceptical, he is ready to reconsider bilateral relations once the US has sincerely and concretely changed its discriminatory policies vis-à-vis Iran. In his own words delivered at a gathering of students in the city of Yazd on 4 December 2007,

>c]utting relations with the US is among our fundamental policies. Of course, we have never said that these relations will be cut forever, rather the conditions of the US government are so that the establishment of such relations at present are harmful to [our] country and, naturally, we do not pursue them. First of all, these relations do not decrease the risk [posed by] the US because the US attacked Iraq while having political relations with that country. Secondly, the establishment of relations would provide the possibility for Americans’ infiltration and the terrain for moving around freely for their intelligence and spies in Iran. […] Be certain that the day when relations with the US should be good for [our] country, I will be the first one to endorse them.

(Khamenei 2007)

Asia: the need to pivot

It is interesting to observe that Ayatollah Khamenei pointed out the need for the IRI to pivot towards Asia a few years before this became a focal point of the Obama administration in the US, in particular, under the tenure of Hillary Clinton as secretary of state. In his case, in a speech given on 16 August 1999/25 Mordad 1378, the leader described the need for Iran to take its relations with Asia more seriously in these terms:

I think that also strengthening our relations with Asia represents an important chapter [in our foreign policy]. I told those working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs many times that we have to look at Asia seriously. Unfortunately, there are still those who do not take seriously our deals with Russia, with Malaysia, [and] with India; they don’t like [them]. The inclination of their heart is always [towards] a European country, even when that country is of a third level – for example Holland or Denmark – they prefer to deal with it rather than with Russia or China. This is a mistake.

(Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 28–29)

Africa: from economic to political relations

Under Ayatollah Khamenei’s tenure as leader, the IRI has shown a sustained attention to the economies of the so-called global South, in particular Africa. This relates to the South-South approach within the foreign policy of the country. The current leader has argued for this policy since the early years of the Islamic Republic. In this respect, back in 1984 and as president of the
Islamic Republic, he stated,

Economic relations should be used to ameliorate political relations […]. For example, [in the case of] Africa and [of] African countries and the likes, the overall policy of the government has been to connect and be linked [economically] with them to the extent possible. However, if we can give to these economic relations the quality of political relations [and] of affective relations between our two governments and between the two nations, we should use these [possibilities] to the greatest extent possible.


**The Arab popular uprisings: an Islamic awakening (bidari-yi islami)**

The leader has dedicated a great deal of attention to the popular uprisings that have flared up across most of Southwest Asia and North Africa since December 2010 (Khamenei 1391/2012–2013). He has gone beyond the mainstream understanding of these events in Euro-American intellectual and political circles, where they are seen as “uprisings,” by describing them as true popular revolutions; revolutions based on what he calls “an Islamic awakening” (bidari-yi islami). In a speech given on 15 August 2004/25 Mordad 1383, he has offered a balanced and cautious explanation of these popular movements in relation to the Islamic Republic:

The Islamic awakening (bidari-yi islami) does not mean that all the countries and individuals that partake in this awakening have acknowledged in a logical and rational form the intellectual foundations of an Islamic system, but it means that, among [these] Muslim crowds, the sentiment of an Islamic identity has appeared.

(Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 45–46)

Moreover, in the previously mentioned message addressed to senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 87–88), he shows a keen awareness of political sensitiveness when he points out how

[d]uring our meeting on the Islamic awakening (bidari-yi islami) I said that, at the beginning of the revolution, among the things we imagined [would occur] there was the realization of the reverberation of our revolutionary movement across different Muslim countries and, in the first place, in Egypt. [At that time] not a [single] voice [of protest] was heard from Egypt. […] However now this same Egypt, the Egypt of Hosni Mubarak, the Egypt of Anwar al-Sadat, the Egypt that gave refuge to Muhammad Reza Shah who was being shunned everywhere, even by the US, is in the hands of people that chant the motto “God is Great” (Allahu Akbar), perform group prayers (namaz), chant Islamic slogans, [and] raise the issue of an Islamic government (hukumat-i islami). […] We do not have any need to say from whom they learned; it is [in fact] better not to touch on these sensitivities at all. What is the necessity to say from whom they receive their inspiration? No, here the issue in not about receiving inspiration [from us]; the issue is that the words that we have been uttering for thirty years have now flourished in North Africa, in the Middle East, [and] in the Persian Gulf.

Overall, Ayatollah Khamenei has stated that he supports those uprisings that are based upon three foundations: Islam, popular support and independence from Western interference (Khamenei 2011).
**Palestine: the most important issue of the Muslim world**

The leader has repeatedly and consistently described Palestine as the most significant international issue. In his own words,

[t]he issue of Palestine is the most important issue of the Islamic world. No other international issue in the Islamic world is more important than the issue of Palestine because the domination of the occupiers of Palestine and Quds over this part of the Islamic Umma is the source of many of the weaknesses and problems in the Islamic world.

(Khamenei n.d.: 11)

He has also remained firm in reiterating that in his view, Israel is an illegitimate and illegal entity in the international arena. In this respect, he refers to Israel as the Zionist state (doulat-i sahiunisti) or the state occupying Palestine (doulat-i ishkalgari filistin), thus refusing to recognize it even by name.
Khamenei on diplomacy and diplomats

Overall, since he took office, Ayatollah Khamenei has, time and time again, sustained that he and the Islamic Republic are ready to engage in diplomatic activity with any country in the world. To this there are extremely few exceptions, notably the state of Israel (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 27; speech given on 31–05– 1368/22–08–1989) which is not recognized as legitimate by the Islamic Republic because of what Iran sees as colonization and institutionalized apartheid.

Khamenei declares himself to be an advocate of qualitative versus quantitative diplomacy (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 23; speech given on 09–12–1388/28–02–2010). He describes diplomacy as both an art (hunar) and similar to a war (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 36–37; speech given on 27–08–1376/18–11–1997) in that there are tactics, retreats, attacks, shifts and military deception (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 15; speech given on 31–05–1368/22–08–1989). He considers the diplomat as an artist, in particular concerning his communicative skills since he must sometimes be able to convey meanings beyond the use of normal language, namely through a language that can be theatrical, pictorial or poetical (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 17; speech given on 27–08–1376/18–11–1997). The leader also affirms that, in addition to art, diplomats must apply wisdom and experience in their activity. He points out that these three components need to be working at the same time and at the same level, in a way that does not lead the art of diplomacy to overwhelm the other two or go against expediency (maslahat) (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 17; speech given on 27–08–1376/18–11–1997). In the Ayatollah’s view, the appropriate path of diplomacy for the Islamic Republic, which he describes as both Islamic and revolutionary, is represented by an Islamic orientation (jahatgiri). This orientation is described as being characterized by audacity (gustakhī) and courage (shuja’at) in facing the enemy and by the rule of reason (‘aql) and logic (mantiq) over both decision-making and actions. In his own words,

[i]f we, for a society [that is] Islamic and revolutionary, believe in a diplomacy [that is] revolutionary and Islamic, [then we have] first of all to maintain an Islamic orientation (jahatgiri-yi islami) and to be audacious (gustakhī) and courageous (shuja’at) in facing the intimidations of [our] enemies and of the big powers. Moreover, we have to [let] reason (‘aql) and logic (mantiq) rule over [our] decisions and actions. This is the right path of diplomacy.


As should be expected from a leader drawing on legitimacy from Islamic bases, Ayatollah Khamenei believes that Iran’s diplomats should dedicate the necessary time to preserving their personal relationship with the Quran and performing their daily ritual prayers (namaz). Moreover, this activity should ideally be strengthened by the performance of devotional prayers (du’a) taken from Sahifi-yi Sajjadiyi – the most important and well-known collection of devotional prayers (du’a) in Iran (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 20–21; speech given on 27–05–
Khamenei has time and again stressed that the strategic foreign policy objectives of the Islamic Republic are the same as those pursued from the very first days of the Revolution (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 22; speech given on 27–05–1383/17–08–2004).

Over the years, Khamenei has always reiterated that an important element in the strength of the Islamic Republic and its diplomats when dealing with their counterparts is their (Islamic) beliefs and principles. This also applies to those practical issues that from a Western perspective might seem to be of little importance, such as not to shake the hand of someone from the opposite sex, not to take part in meetings where alcohol is served or not to be dressed in accordance with Western-defined dress codes. This covers the use of bow ties or for that matter of any type of tie whatsoever (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 23; speech given on 28 February 2010). This also partly applies to traditions such as the exchange of presents between diplomats, in which case the leader stresses the necessity to exchange objects that are not expensive but, rather, are appropriate and to take into account that the presents received by diplomats should not be considered their personal belongings but, rather, as pertaining to the state (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 20. Speech given on 18 August 2002).
Considerations and conclusion

According to the constitution of the IRI, the general policies of the country must be determined, or at least endorsed, by the leader. In this respect, art. 110, which lists ten main duties and prerogatives entrusted to the leader, states that the first is

[t]he determination of the general policies of the system (nizam) of the Islamic Republic of Iran after consultation with the Council for the Discernment of the Interest of the System (Majma-i Tashkhis-i Maslahat-i Nizam).

Moreover, according to art. 57,

[i]n the Islamic Republic the powers of government are vested in the Legislative, the Judiciary and the Executive, which [all] function under the supervision of the absolute authority of the Leadership of the Ummah (vilayat-i mulla-yi amr va imamat-i ummat), [...].

These and other articles invest the leader with an unparalleled power to determine the general policies of the country, particularly those closely related to its foreign policy. It is perhaps on account of this that A. Ganji described Ayatollah Khamenei as “Iran’s head of state, commander in chief, and top ideologue.” (Ganji 2013: 24). Therefore, a better knowledge and assessment of Khamenei’s international relations outlook and how he sees the role of diplomacy and foreign policy in shaping the place of the IRI in the world are essential to the analysis of current international affairs. Moreover, as leader of one of the most important Muslim countries – and the largest Shi'i-majority country – in the world, the analysis of his political language and international philosophy is important to understand and evaluate current developments in Muslim intellectual history as regards world politics.

Early in his political life, at a time when he was president of the country – a country dragged into a long and deadly “imposed” war with Iraq under Saddam Hussein – Ayatollah Khamenei interestingly affirmed that the foreign policy of Iran is not expansionistic (tousi-i-talabani) or aggressive (tajavuz-karani), nor is it aimed at a world where everyone becomes Muslim, with a single world government headed by the leader of the Islamic Republic. On the contrary, this foreign policy assumes that the world polity is characterized by a plurality of states (hukumat-ha) with different and conflicting interests (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 24; speech given on 27 July 1985). This position is reflected in the overall international relations outlook of the IRI, which acts fully within – and hence accepts – the established reality of a Westphalian international order composed of sovereign nation-states. Some regional analysts have pointed out that the difference between Khamenei’s political philosophy and Western-defined political theory lies not in the acceptance or refusal of modern nation-states but in the definition of legitimacy in terms of political representation and governance (Leverett and Leverett 2013: 166).

As we have shown in this chapter – and as should be expected from a leader asserting Islamic
legitimacy – for Ayatollah Khamenei legitimacy is formulated in terms of upholding a set of principles and values characterized by their “Islamicity.” Put directly and simply by the leader himself, “the results of our political and diplomatic moves and efforts must not contravene our Islamic ideals” (quoted in Marandi 2011; speech given 12 December 1982).

All in all, we can describe Khamenei’s international political philosophy as both principalist (i.e. based on principled policies) and rational. In the leader’s view, it is legitimate for Iran to pursue its national interest, and this should be determined on the basis of dignity (‘izzat), wisdom (hikmat) and expediency (maslahat). Moreover, the IRI’s foreign policy and political principles must be presented and defended on the international scene through argumentation (istidlal) (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 28; speech given on 16 August 1999). Argumentation (istidlal) is closely interconnected with one of the main means for acquiring knowledge and forming intellectual judgement in Islam: reason (‘aql). In his compendium of Shi’i beliefs and practices, Ayatollah Ja’far Sobhani, a prominent senior Muslim religious scholar based in Qom, underlined how Islam uses three main ways of acquiring knowledge of the world: the senses, intellect and reason and revelation (Sobhani 2001: 1). In this respect, in a speech given on 21 March 2009 as an indirect response to the first video message directed by President Obama two days earlier to the “people and leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran” on the occasion of the Persian New Year (Nowruz) the leader stated,

We don’t know who in the US is the real decision maker: the President, the Congress or [some] agents behind the scenes; but, in any case, I [want to] stress [the fact] that the Iranian nation as regards issues related to itself is a people of calculation (ahl-i muhasibe) and logic (ahl-i mantiq) and does not become emotional.

(Khamenei 2009)

We have seen how Khamenei argued for an Islamic orientation (jahatgiri) in pursuing the foreign policy of the IRI, and described this orientation as characterized, on one hand, by audacity (gustukhi) and courage (shuja’at) and, on the other hand, by reason (‘aql) and logic (mantiq). Moreover, we have also seen how, in describing Islam, he underlined that his understanding of Islam is a rational (‘aqlani) Islam and that reason (‘aql) should be widely used in determining the goals of the IRI.

In this framework, F. Leverett and H. Mann Leverett have argued that the introduction of the principle of maslahat (expediency) into the political discourse of the IRI clearly signals the distinct rationality and realism of post-revolutionary Iran (Leverett and Leverett 2013: 61–62). Moreover, what has been described in this chapter challenges what these scholars define as two of the three pillars of the mythology about the Islamic Republic and its leader: “the irrationality myth” and the “illegitimacy myth.” In the first case, it is evident that the political language and international political philosophy put forward by Ayatollah Khamenei is centred on the use of the intellect (‘aql) and on a conscious use of political pragmatism (maslahat) in observance of Iran’s material national interest. In the second case, in a Muslim country, legitimacy is not necessarily based on (or at least limited to) Western-defined principles and paradigms but on principles of Islamic governance (hikmat, ‘izzat, maslahat, ‘idalat, iman, ma’naviyat and so on) and the use of a political vocabulary and discourse that makes reference to the rich political culture developed by
the Islamic civilization during its fifteen-century-long history; this is certainly the view of the current leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

While in the last decade in Western academe there have been some sporadic but solid attempts at developing a better understanding of Islamic political thought (Crone 2004; Black 2011; Bowering 2013), scholars of International Relations have so far given little if no attention to Islamic international thought (Mauriello 2016: 1–6). Indeed, as shown Acharya and Buzan, this, in fact, is the case of any non-Western international thought (Acharya and Buzan 2010). This chapter aimed at filling the gap in the available literature on the subject by presenting a first articulated delineation of the international outlook of one of the most remarkable figures in recent history on the international scene, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. It did so through the presentation and analysis of his political language as regards world affairs. This analysis indicates that in the last four decades the current leader of the IRI has been consistent and coherent in developing and presenting his own worldview. This is based on a lexicon that has a deep and established tradition in the Islamic civilization.
Notes

1 Raffaele Mauriello conducted the research for this essay as part of a two-year postdoctoral fellowship at the Faculty of World Studies, University of Tehran (2015–2017).

2 In this respect it can be considered a contribution – as regards the Muslim world – to addressing the problematic raised by Shilliam (2011) and Achraya and Buzan (2010). Moreover, being authored by two scholars working in a non-Western geocultural site and studying a distinct geo-epistemological perspective, the present article fulfils the necessity of “worlding beyond the West” raised by Tickner and Wæver (2009), Tickner and Blaney (2011) and Tickner and Blaney (2012).

3 A partial exception to this are Hovsepian-Bearce (2016) and Morewedge (2015). However, in the first case, the work follows in the established pattern of addressing the Muslim world in terms of either geopolitics or political science limited to the study of politics on the internal or domestic sphere or within the state and therefore does not cover the international relations perspective offered in this article. The second work is, on the other hand, aimed at the “political enlightenment” of the educated US public (see “Editor’s Introduction”), covering general aspects of political philosophy. In both cases, moreover, the interdisciplinary approach based on both IR and Islamic Studies is manifestly absent. A last exception is Sadjadpour (2009).

4 In this respect, Khamenei (1390/2011–2012) appears to be particularly useful in that it collects recommendations and advice given by Ayatollah Khamenei on a regular basis directly to Iran’s diplomats to provide them with guidance and general principles of foreign policy. It can therefore be considered partly at a removal from, or rather, not just limited to tackling the skirmishes of day-to-day national and international politics.

5 The title “seyed” is used among the Shi’as to designate those claiming a direct genealogical descent from the prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatima and her husband, Ali ibn Abi Talib.

6 The entire text of the message is reproduced in Khamenei (1391/2012–2013: 83–96).

7 Its derivative words occur 209 times in the Quran. See Badawi and Abdel Haleem (2008: 226).


9 Its derivative words occur 120 times. See Badawi and Abdel Haleem (2008: 617).

10 Its derivative words occur 240 times. See Badawi and Abdel Haleem (2008: 531).

11 At least according to Shirazi (1998: 233–244). On the other hand, Izadhi (1393/2014–2015: 18) argues that maslahat has a very long past in Shi’a fiqh. Complicating things even further, Hallaq (1997: 112–113; 2009: 504–508) points out that maslahat was controversial also among pre-modern Sunni legal theoreticians and was appropriated by Muhammad Rashid Rida (and via him by Islamic reformers) in the late 19th century as a pillar of his rationalization of the materialist exigencies of modernity. On the other hand, Afsaruddin (2013), claims that, as a socio-political principle, maslahat existed from the onset of Islam, both Shi’a and Sunni. In addition to “expediency,” maslahat is also usually translated as “public interest” and “utility.”
Also known as Expediency Discernment Council of the System or simply Expediency Council.

In effect, this is a policy that Iran – decades before Khomeini and Khamenei – also tried to pursue in the early 1950s under the brief and unfortunate leadership of Dr. M. Mosaddeq. Within his larger foreign policy of non-alignment, he tried, and failed, to cooperate with the US to balance not only against British and Soviet influence in both worlds but also internal (Iranian) affairs. In this respect, Ayatollah Khamenei stated that Mosaddeq was naïve in his trust in the US.

For example, see Porter (2014). Moreover, and in terms of concrete foreign policy initiatives, in his part study, part memoir, Mousavian (2014: 127–132) has described the IRI’s long-standing commitment to the elimination and non-proliferation of WDMs in the Gulf and more broadly in the Near East elaborated and put forward since at least the early years of Ayatollah Khamenei’s leadership of the country and under the presidency of Hashemi Rafsanjani (1989–1997), in particular within the wider framework of enhancing the IRI collaboration with the European Union on fostering regional security.

The translation offered earlier has been slightly changed by the authors as regards the translation of the term *haram*, which has not been translated in the English text provided on the website of the Leader (www.khamenei.ir). This has a dedicated page that gives a list of his statements on the nuclear issue from 2006 up to 2015. See http://english.khamenei.ir/Opinions/tnuclear.

The translation offered earlier has been changed by the authors as regards the term *fiqhi*, untranslated in the official translation.

See www.nuclearenergy.ir/legal-aspects/#Fatwa_against_Nuclear_Weapons.

Despite its long history and importance, foreign policy relations between Europe and Iran have not received the necessary attention by the critics and the literature is scanty. Of use can be Mousavian (2008) and Hanau-Santini, Mauriello and Trombetta (2009).

There is a vast literature addressing the relations between the IRI and US. Particularly well researched are Leverrett and Leverrett (2013), Mousavian (2014) and Fayazmanesh (2008).

President Khamenei spoke in Persian. Iran’s delegation furnished an English text of the speech, available online in the UN Dag Digital Library here: http://hdl.handle.net/11176/151815.

A different translation in English of this passage is available in Ganji (2013: 32).

In this respect, he referred to the US as “the world’s greatest devil” (taghut-i a’zam-i dunya). (Khamenei 1391/2012–2013: 61).

In other occasions, he also uses the term *fann*, “art” but also “craft” (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 23; 09/12/1388).

For example, see the speeches given on 28 February 2010 (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 23) and on 18 August 2003, (Khamenei 1390/2011–2012: 29–30, 44), and the message addressed to senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Khamenei 1390/2011– 2012: 95–96).

To understand how serious these issues are for Iran’s diplomats, we can mention the recent cancellation of an official dinner between president F. Hollande of France and Hasan Rouhani due precisely to the Iranians’ request not to have alcohol at the dinner table. See “France-Iran: l’alcool au cœur de l’annulation d’un repas officiel,” Zaman France, 10 November 2015, available online here: www.zamanfrance.fr/article/france-iran-
E. Abrahamian has argued that the founding father of the IRI, Ayatollah Khomeini, also accepted the existence of territorial nation-states. See Abrahamian (1993: 15).

It is important to mention that this challenges common held assumptions about the essentially idealistic character of IRI’s foreign policy orientation. For example, see Ahmadi (2008).

The third is the “isolation myth” (Leverett and Leverett 2013: 8).
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3

The Arab right to difference

Taha Abderrahmane’s concept of the awakened youth and the formation of modern Arab Nationhood

Mohammed Hashas
Introduction

Although modern international relations may be dominated by theories and practices of big powers and their societies, it is wrong to think that societies that bear this dominance, directly or indirectly, do not think about or theorize international relations. They do so, though their views may not have a clear impact on real international affairs. Arguably, their focus is internal first: to build functional modern states. The Arab world is an example here. The Arab philosophical tradition does not limit thinking for change to its internal tradition and geography since the globalization of international relations has opened local thinking and rendered its critique national, regional and global. That is why the quest for change in international relations starts by underlining both national and regional differences and, by implication and explication, the local aspirations for global justice in international affairs. This is the general take of Taha Abderrahmane (b. 1944, Morocco), a leading philosopher of language, logic and ethics in the Arab-Islamic world (Hashas, 2014, 2015). Despite his relevance, Abderrahmane has remained unknown and understudied in Euro-American academia.

In the Arab world, in particular, he enjoys the status of a major philosopher, especially that he stands critical of many of his contemporaries, like his two compatriots who are more known in the “West,” that is the philosophers Mohammed Abed al-Jabri (d. 2010) and Abdallah Laroui (b. 1933). Unlike these two, Taha Abderrahmane started to be more known only during the last two decades. He first came to the Arab public through Masārāt (Trajectories) intellectual TV programme of Aljazeera Channel in Doha in May 2006 in six episodes. He received the Moroccan Writers Award in 1988 and 1995; the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Award in 2006; and King Mohammed VI Award in Islamic Thought in 2014. He was invited by the Ministry of Religious Affairs to give a lecture, during the month of Ramadan Lectures Series of 2006 (known as addurūs al-ḥasaniyya), in front of King Mohammed VI; he was also invited to give a lecture in Carthage Palace in Tunisia “post–Arab Spring” in 2013, in front of the president of Tunisia Mouncef al-Marzouki. During the last three years, three annual conferences have been organized successively in his honour, in Agadir, Marrakesh and al-Jadida in 2014, 2015, and 2016, respectively. Overall, his work is gradually being read and examined during the last few years also outside the Arab world. (Hashas, 2014, 2015).

This chapter focuses on his political philosophy. I synthesize it by taking into account his various works, with a focus on his conceptualization of the requirements for the formation of a modern Arab nation-state.

Because the context of writing this chapter is represented by the events of the so-called Arab Spring or Arab Revolts, I introduce Abderrahmane’s concept of the “awakened youth” (al-futuwwa al-muntafiḍa) as the highest stage of “ethical renewal” in Arab political philosophy. That is, ethics become the vital axis on which renewal in the Arab world can be based for the formation of modern nation-states. The concept used to refer to this nation-state is “living
nationhood” (*al-qawmiyya al-ḥayya*). The required renewal is double: philosophical and political. I refer to it as “double awakening.” Based on Abderrahmane’s philosophical framework, and in the light of the ongoing events of the Arab revolts, this chapter argues that the double awakening (philosophical and political) aspired for is in progress, depending on different Arab regions and the potential they have for change. This means that the concept of the “awakened youth” reflects “youth awakenings” that have fuelled the revolts despite the horrific repercussions they have turned into in some countries because of internal and external factors that this chapter does not deal with. The chapter takes the “Moroccan Spring” as an experiment of Abderrahmane’s concepts introduced earlier. The aim is not so much to present an argument but some concepts of political philosophy that can be applied in the study of local Arab social movements and political events. These are concepts that reflect the local tradition, which is grappling with its own history in an age of European modernity and international hegemony over the region.

To explain the concept of the “awakened youth,” I go through a number of stages so as to clearly situate it in the general philosophy of Abderrahmane. I proceed as follows: First, I introduce Abderrahmane’s view of the task of philosophy, or what I refer to here as the “localization” and “politicization” of philosophy. I refer to his ideas of “the Arab right to philosophical difference.” Abderrahmane also theorizes “the Islamic right to intellectual difference,” but here I am more concerned with the Arab right than with the Islamic one – though they intertwine immensely in his project. Second, after emphasizing the need for a “philosophical awakening” (*qawma falsafiyya*), I move to politicize this call through the need for a “political awakening” (*qawma siyyāsiyya*). I introduce the concept of the “living nationhood” (*al-qawmiyya al-ḥayya*) as the aspired-for form of a nation-state that is both modern and rooted in Arab (and Islamic) values. I refer to its features and the strategic plans to concretize it. Third, I briefly refer to Islamic ethics as a step towards the realization of the “living nationhood.” Fourth, I introduce the concept of the “awakened youth” (*al-futuwa al-muntafiḍa*) and its task of endorsing a double awakening, philosophic and political, fuelled with the characteristics of the Arabic living nation and Islamic ethics. Finally, I take the Moroccan context as a case study for closing remarks, where I try to match Abderrahmane’s concepts with the political realities in the country.
Prerequisite: the localization of philosophy for political awakening

Abderrahmane’s language and logical argumentation are unique if compared to the various contemporary Arab-Islamic philosophical projects. His language in particular echoes a classical Arab-Islamic tradition of philosophical writing and argumentation. His expertise in logic and mastery of some European languages that allows his direct access to the original sources of Western philosophical texts renders his Arabic composition (style) and way of coining new terminology an unrivalled project in modern Arab philosophy. Driven by questions of “defeat” after the Six Days War of 1967, the young doctoral graduate of La Sorbonne dwells on revisiting the role of (Arab-Islamic) philosophy for renewal and change.

Abderrahmane develops a new task for philosophy. While the Greeks considered that the task of philosophy is to “raise questions” (Aristotle in focus) and the Europeans considered “criticism” its primal task (Kant in focus), Abderrahmane believes that this age is that of ethical responsibility, so the task of philosophy is to raise a “responsible question” (assu’āl al-mas’ūl). When there is a question, then there is a responsibility that follows to answer it (in Arabic, the move is from assu’āliyya [questioning] to al-mas’ūliyya [responsibility] in philosophy; Abderrahmane, 2002, pp. 13–15). Accordingly, a question receives an ethical dimension through responsibility. If it is posed, it has to be answered, and the feel of responsibility makes the exercise of answering ethical: “Philosophizing without [practical] ethics is null and void” (Abderrahmane, 2002, p. 15).

In so thinking, Abderrahmane is actually corroborating his idea of “praxeology of philosophy” or “the essence of philosophy” (fiqh al-falsafa) that goes beyond the limitations surrounding the cognitive capacities of a particular philosopher. Abderrahmane argues that philosophy as a discipline of inquiry and questioning is a limited one. What seems more open as a discipline is fiqh al-falsafa that could be as expansive and inclusive as usūl al-fiqh (the sources of fiqh). The latter includes disciplines such as language and linguistics, logic and the sciences of tafsir and hadith, among others. In other words, Abderrahmane is regrounding Arab-Islamic philosophy in its “original sources” (al-manhağ al-usūlī) for the practice of thought from within, as if going back to the early stage of Arab-Islamic philosophy (Abderrahmane, 1995). He targets what he calls in The Spirit of Modernity “the second birth of the Islamic message” (Abderrahmane, 2006). Without such a renewal, a “second death” – meaning decline/decadence – is possible (Abderrahmane, 2002, p. 8).

Binding philosophy to questions that have to be answered responsibly is the task the Arab (and Muslim) philosopher has to engage with. Abderrahmane here calls for prioritizing some questions over others. He wants Arab philosophy to raise questions that concern its current status and needs. He aims at concentrating its energies on questions the Arab philosopher faces and not
on questions imposed by the external/hegemonic philosophy of the West and its own questions. The latter has no right to impose its own philosophical issues/questions on the Arab philosopher.

At this point, Abderrahmane weakens two practices that he says many other Arab-Muslim philosophers have fallen into: (1) universal thought (al-fiqr al-wāḥid) and (2) le fait accompli (al-amr al-wāqi’i). For the first, he believes that if philosophy in the past sought convergences among cultures, now the opposite is the case. Against the power of questions raised by hegemonic philosophies – such as that of the West – current philosophy has to seek difference; otherwise, its role of liberating thought and thus its welcoming of criticism and disagreement would die, and all philosophical traditions become the same, raising the same questions imposed by the hegemon. This is against the ideal of philosophy: the liberation of thought. As to le fait accompli, it is much tied to the previous point. Accepting questions raised by a philosophical tradition that is supported by a political-economic hegemon means the intellectual death of other traditions, a death which the “responsible question” and ethical philosophy do not allow. Unitary thought (al-fikr al-wāḥid or attaswiyya athaqāfiyya) is against criticism and difference principles of exercising philosophy, “we, the Arabs, want to be free in our philosophy” (Abderrahmane, 2002, p. 22). It is only when this freedom is granted, and “our particular philosophy” takes shape that “dialogue” can take place. Liberty brings difference, and difference leads to dialogue, and this dialogue is part of the “responsible question” process (Abderrahmane, 2002, p. 22).

The “Arab right to philosophical difference” is a right to liberation from blind imitation (taqlid) of three philosophical projects: Greekization (attaghrīq), Westernization-Europeanization (attaghrīb) and Judaization (attahwīd). The first project is the Greek one. For example, unlike many contemporary Arab philosophers as well as Orientalists, Abderrahmane considers Ibn Roshd (Averroes) a mere “imitator” – in his own words – of Aristotle. On the other hand, he appreciates the originality of al-Ghazali, who tried to distinguish Islamic philosophy from Greek influence and has been misread as an opponent of reason for that (Abderrahmane, 2003, pp. 119–120). Abderrahmane considers al-Jabri’s work another imitation of an imitator of Aristotle – that is al-Jabri is known to be Averroest in his approach of separating but reconciling religion and philosophy; thus, being Averroest means being an imitator, according to Abderrahmane (Abderrahmane, 1994). Also, he considers that the division between reason and religion (or al-‘aql wa al-shar’) is a mere Greek philosophical problem that a number of early Islamic philosophers integrated into Arab-Islamic philosophy, either because of imitation or because of mistranslation and inability to find more adequate Arabic terms for Greek philosophical concepts (Abderrahmane, 2002, pp. 135–168).

As to Westernization-Europeanization (attaghrīb), Abderrahmane is critical of the European appropriation of the Greek heritage and henceforth the monopoly of all philosophy, as if it were only Greek and now only European. Abderrahmane refers to original texts of Heidegger and Husserl, for example, to defend his idea that German philosophy has tried to appropriate European philosophy and claim itself the only or main heir of Greek philosophy. This aspect belittles the idea of the universality of philosophy that this same philosophy claims. Further than that, Abderrahmane argues that the German claim of leading European philosophy has been influenced by Jewish philosophers who have not hidden their Judaic heritage. He refers to the
influences of Ibn Maymun (Maimonides) on Leibniz through Nicolas de Cues and the influence of Spinoza and Mendelssohn Moses on Kant. Hegel and Nietzsche note the influence of the Judaic tradition on Kant, too. Succinctly, the Judaic philosophy mediated the Greek philosophy and the German one through its positioning of the “logos” as the mediator between God and man, which Christian theology would integrate by interpreting the Holy Spirit as the “logos.” This philosophical aspect aside, it is the politicization of the Judaic tradition through the search for a geographical place for the materialization of the “promised land” through the Zionist movement which makes German philosophy substantially Judaic. Since German philosophy claims itself in the lead of European philosophy and the heir of Greek philosophy, then the universality aspect it claims is Judaic as well – thus the name “Judaization/attahwīd” (Abderrahmane, 2002, p. 58–65).

The contention here is that (Western) philosophy is first local and national before it is universal; since this is the case, then the right of other traditions to underline local and national concepts in their philosophies becomes a normal philosophical practice; it is only through this local rootedness that concepts can have meaning when they are universalized or when discussed by other philosophies. The argument here is that liberation of thought starts as local thought. If it starts as universal thought, it certainly follows the philosophic guidelines of the universal hegemons; the universal philosophies of hegemons find support in the economic and political influence of the political entities where they flourish. The aim at the end is to shape one’s own modernity, thus Abderrahmane’s idea of “multiple modernities.” If “first modernity” claims to be purely European, why then is this same right of shaping one’s own modernity – through one’s own philosophy – denied to others? A “second modernity” is accordingly not only possible but is required (Hashas, 2014). This is the framework within which Abderrahmane builds his project of renewing Arabic (and Islamic) philosophy and subsequently politics (Abderrahmane, 2006, pp. 11–69). What I am then taking from Abderrahmane in this chapter is his localization, henceforth Arabization, of philosophy for political awakening.
Abderrahmane proposes a “living nationhood” (*qawmiyya ḥayya*), and not nationalism, as the concept around which the Arab world and Arabic speaking nations should develop their own philosophical and, consequently, political independence (Abderrahmane, 2002, pp. 193–203). This means that it is only through philosophical renewal that political independence can be achieved:

> we have to start to think to philosophize for ourselves, and not for our enemy [that does not allow us to think], so that we can be among the living, and not among the dead; it is not a philosopher he who thinks to extinguish himself but he who thinks to live.

(Abderrahmane, 2002, p. 66)

In *al-ḥadātha wal muqāwama* [*Modernity and Resistance*] (2007) Abderrahmane defends modernity from within and underlines the ideas of resistance against mimicry and hegemony by means of creativity as a form of living a truly modern life.

The “living nationhood” (*al-qawmiyya al-ḥayya*) is characterized by three features: standing or rising (*al-qiyyām*), obligations (*al-qiwām*) and awakening (*al-qawma*) (Abderrahmane, 2000, pp. 171–186). Rising (*al-qiyyām*) is rooted in the verb “to stand up” or “to rise up” (*qāma*). It is based on “movement and work” (*al-ḥaraka wa al-ʿamal*). Therefore, a living nation is that which is constantly dynamic and at work being productive. Obligations (*al-qiwām*) are the values that make the movement and work reasonable and ethical in their essence. A nation cannot be dynamic and productive unless it has a value system around which it centres its efforts so as to make itself respectable to its own people and to people outside it. These values are “material or civilizational” and thus lead to the construction of a civilization from within this active nation; these material values could be shared by others outside this nation. There are also “spiritual and cultural” values, which colour the nation with a “specificity” as a civilization (Abderrahmane, 2002, pp. 67–69). The awakening (*al-qawma*), the most important feature, is a revolution that changes not only the material status quo of a nation but also its spiritual specificity by renewing it. For Abderrahmane, a revolution may stop at the material level and may be violent and cause some damage instead of repair and order. What is required for the ethical productivity of a nation is a “qawma,” an awakening that is especially philosophic-spiritual and that touches the value system of its own people, with the aim of expanding, through philosophical dialogue, these spiritual and ethical values to the world at large (Abderrahmane, 1987, 2005, 2013). The awakening “is the work of jihad and ijtihad” as practiced by all the members of the nation – both jihad and *ijtihad* here are defined primarily as internal and intellectual exercises practiced to respectively refuse what contradicts the value system of the nation and bring to it what serves it. It is first and foremost a “philosophical awakening” (*qawma falsafiyya*). Following this
philosophical awakening there is a political awakening, which I refer to as *qawma siyyāsiyya*, though Abderrahmane does not use this linguistic symmetry. He says that the philosophical awakening may melt in abstraction if it does not find (political) bases on the ground – the localization of philosophical responsible questions has to be remembered here (Abderrahmane, 2002, pp. 69–70).

This transformation of philosophical thought into a political one goes through three conceptual stages, which he considers as plans of the awakening (*khuṭaṭ* or *istrāṭīǧiyāt al-qawmiyya al-ḥayya*): resistance (*al-muqāwama*), evaluation (*attaqwīm*) and edification (*al-iqāma*).

Resistance (*al-muqāwama*) is not only material on the ground in cases of external imperial projects. Rather, the resistance plan is based on the principle of rejecting any imported or foreign philosophical concepts unless they are proved to be compatible with the value system of the living nationhood project (I address later what these basic values are by referring to the intertwining between Arabic living nationhood and his other project of renewing Islamic thought). Even when a new concept seems good, it does not necessarily mean it is compatible with the “difference” principle of Abderrahmane’s project based on ethics. One of the examples of these concepts is the Hegelian concept of “the end of history” (later widespread by Francis Fukuyama). Accepting such a concept simply means the death of Arab-Islamic worldview and other traditions (Abderrahmane, 2002, pp. 70–72).

The evaluation plan/strategy (*attaqwīm*) is based on the principle of measuring human concepts with the measurement of “higher values” and “lower values” that may be good but endangering of human diversity, dignity and humanness. Evaluation always aims high and does not hasten at calling for, say, ontological and/or epistemological breaks as has done the concept of “modernity” in its European model. For example, European modernity cannot be universal, and thus should be critiqued/evaluated in light of “higher values” that go beyond its limitations. It claims that religion is a problem, that rationality is purely a modern product and that so are liberty and equality. For Abderrahmane, this is just partly true because human history has always lived part and parcel of developments of these values, which European modernity cannot claim to itself. Past civilizations, including the Arab-Islamic one, defended these values, although on different degrees and priorities that each worldview and civilization advances (Abderrahmane, 2002, pp. 73–76).

The edification plan (*al-iqāma*) is based on the principle that the stages of resistance and evaluation have to culminate in renewal, starting by coining terms and building concepts that the so-called universal philosophy of the West does not provide or allow. Such an edification primarily depends on its natural context, or what he calls the “natural domain,” in forming its concepts and philosophy. In this strategy of edification, the localization and Arabization of philosophy then take their highest forms at the conceptual level, a level much rooted in its context and from which they nourish themselves with responsible questions (Abderrahmane, 2002, pp. 70–79).
Islamic ethics as a passage to the realization of the “living nationhood”

It is not possible to speak of philosophic and political awakening in the Arab world without referring to the substantial place given to Islam in Abderrahmane’s project. They (the Arab world and Islam) intertwine to inseparable degrees in his works. What I integrate in this chapter from his work on renewing Islamic thought is his philosophy of ethics. The idea is that Islamic theological and *fiqh* renewal and Arab philosophical rebirth are bound together by his theory of ethics. Unlike the limitations of Western rationality, in Abderrahmane’s view ethics is the reinvigorating force that nations seeking renewal in the age of modernity need. Since the envisaged ethical norms stem from a world religion that is considered as a continuation of previous revealed religions – and thus, ideally, not in antagonism with the idea of the oneness of God, the ontological freedom of men and their equality at the moment of creation – the Arabs could be among the most fortunate people to build on this ethical message, revealed in their language, and contribute not only to revisiting their tradition but also to the formation of a “second modernity” (*ḥadātha thāniyya*) and the “coming world” (*al-‘ālam al-muntaẓar*). In the following, I introduce the general idea of Abderrahmane’s ethics before I link it to the concept I am driving at – the “awakened youth.”

Abderrahmane does not take ethics to be an independent discipline, separate from human existence and his agency or action. According to my reading of his project, his theory is based on an ontological bond among three major components: religion, reason and ethics, seen as inseparable entities. (In a while I will add the fourth entity of “doing/work” as also paramount in his ethical project for a philosophic-political double awakening). I refer first to the bond between religion and ethics, followed by the bond between reason and ethics.

Abderrahmane regrounds Islamic philosophy on an ontological fact he sees has been lost from early Islamic times. This ontological fact is the “original unity” between religion and politics and between this-worldly affairs and other-worldly worlds, which makes religion vital to human life, for religion means ethics, and man without ethics is impossible; that is, there is no man without ethics since it is the latter than distinguish human beings from other existing beings, and gives meaning to life. Abderrahmane argues at length that religion equals ethics: “religion and ethics are one” (Abderrahmane, 2000, p. 52). He does not separate the two. He sees them as one ontological unit: “The existence of man [...] does not precede the existence of ethics, but accompanies it” (Abderrahmane, 2000, p. 54). And since religion (and consequently ethics) has existed with the existence of man (Abderrahmane, 2006, p. 25), the following syllogism is reached: there is “no man without ethics, [...] no ethics without religion, [...] and no man without religion.” (Abderrahmane, 2000, pp. 147–149). Linking ethics to work, he says that “ethics in Islam are the origin of any work” (Abderrahmane, 2006, p. 188). Based on this ethical project,
Abderrahmane says that a new “civilization of ethos” is needed; it is the “awaited for civilization” (Abderrahmane, 2000, p. 146).

The same thing applies to reason. Reason is not considered an entity independent from religion and ethics. Abderrahmane divides “rational ability” into three basic levels: “rationality of abstraction,” “rationality of living experience” and “rationality of Sophist belief,” which match three terms: “abstract reason,” “guided reason” and “supported reason.” The “abstract reason” is limited to the description of things, the “guided reason” is devoted to doing things, whereas the “supported reason” represents the capability of knowing their internal identity. “Supported reason” is “expanded reason” (Abderrahmane, 1989). For Abderrahmane, European modernity has not gone beyond the first two levels of reasoning, and Islamic thought has mimicked it and has been unable to overcome it too.

Following the same categorization, Abderrahmane speaks of three levels of ethics. First, by ethics he means “the quest for good per se” (Abderrahmane, 2000, p. 14). It is ethics that distinguishes man from any other species, and not reason. Ethics is the essence of humanness, and without it man is not a human. Ethics, then, has to be entangled with every single act of man, however simple or abstract it may be (Abderrahmane, 2000, p. 157). Abderrahmane refutes theories that say that ethics are part of religion or follow religion or the ones that claim that religion is part of or follows ethics. They are interdependent in the sense that they intertwine inseparably. For him, Greek and European philosophies have idolized reason and have been expressed accordingly. He calls Western civilization a “civilization of wording” (ḥadāratu al-qawl) because according to it man is a speaking animal, and this speaking is the result of his abstract reasoning. As to the theory of ethics he builds, it is part of the Islamic spiritual worldview, which he calls a “civilization of doing” (ḥadāratu al-fi) (Abderrahmane, 2000, pp. 77–78). That is, ethics in Islam is not a different entity that either follows or is followed by religion or reason. Rather, ethics is the equivalent of religion. Religion and ethics are one (Abderrahmane, 2000, p. 157). It is also the equivalent of work, or doing. There is no act that can escape the field of ethics. I will come back to this in subsequent paragraphs, but I first refer to a few major features of Abderrahmane’s theory of “supported ethics” (akhlāq mu’ayyada).

While “abstract ethics” and “guided ethics” match “abstract” and “guided” reason because they (ethics) are broadly seen as separate from religion and reason and, thus, can be applied only partially, Abderrahmane speaks of “supported ethics” (akhlāq mu’ayyada) when he refers to ethics. When he stresses ethics as a theory, he is not just calling for paying more attention to their role in human life. Instead, he is saying that without ethics, there is no man and no innovative and truly human civilization.

I refer to four principles of these ethics to clarify the point. First is the principle of obligation (mabda’ al-īǧāb): ethics in the stage of “supported ethics” are not optional; they are the essence of human identity; without them evil or wrong occurs. Like made law that entails punishment for those who do not follow it, through particular authorities that are agreed on, ethics is also a law that entails punishment for those who do not follow them. The difference between the two is that the punishing authority is oneself; it is spiritual and internal. If it is not visible as a punishment, it does not mean that it is not there, nor does it mean that the committed wrong is not punishable.
A consistent person would feel guilty and not at ease with him- or herself. Second is the principle of reproduction (mabda’ attakṭīr): ethics do not have one shape or one form or one place. Rather, they transform their prerequisites according to (1) time, (2) space and (3) the consequences it engenders. An ethicist would always measure the consequences of his or her action and make pursuing the good his or her target. While a good may seem good in some particular time or space, it does not necessarily bring good consequences in that time and space as it may in others. This means that a particular ethical attitude can take many shapes and have different consequences according to the preceding three conditions. Ethics are thus expansive, embracive of time and space and the intellect that balances the consequences. Third is the principle of organization (mabda’ attartīb): ethics are infinite in their scope; the more the ethicist is committed to them, the more ethical attitudes and satisfaction they bring about. As time and space change, so do the consequences. This means that ethics are not of one degree. The fact that they are expansive and inclusive makes them classifiable one on another; each good act brings another when it is measured according to the consequences it brings in different times and spaces. Fourth is the principle of expansion (mabda’ al-ittiṣā‘): this makes the ethicist unable to think of an uncovered field where he may be unethical in his behaviour or thought. His or her doing and thought about humanity and the whole cosmos become ethical. Ethics become identical to his or her senses and to his or her being. Without ethics he or she feels life is useless, and only through it is meaning gained (Abderrahmane, 2000, pp. 81–84).

The preceding principles of supported ethics are based on doing (al-fi‘l). Doing, in turn, is based on three principles that I mention in brief: (1) belief in this value system of ethics (that is inseparable from religion) remains incomplete without living ethics (mabda’ al-ishtīgh ā l al mubāshīr); (2) the previous principles of reproduction and expansion of ethics mean that the ethicist takes some infinite ideals or attributes of ethics as his guide, and these ideas are the “attributes of the divine” (mabda’ attakhaluq bi aṣifāt al-ḥusnā). Their infinity is the only attribute that can guide the ethicist in his or her path of consistency and ethical perfection and closeness to the ethics of the divine; (3) human beings need concrete examples in their ethical aspirations, and the prophetic example is unrivalled (mabda’ al-iqtīdā’ al-ḥay). These principles of ethical doing bring about three consequences: (1) “the feel of happiness” (ashu ‘ur bi āṣa‘āda) through the liberation from possessiveness and slavery to people and men; (2) “humility” and modesty (annaḏra al-insāniyya) towards the self, others and the cosmos; and (3) “artistic taste” (aḏawq al-ǧamāli) which ethics engender because the happiness they bring render one always appreciative of people and the world; the diversity of the world becomes itself an ethical feature that the ethicist likes to see because it brings him or her joy and makes him or her discover multiple levels of humanness within the self, through training the self to accommodate itself in different times and spaces (Abderrahmane, 2000, pp. 84–89).

In The Spirit of Religion, Abderrahmane says that Western thought has idolized reason (allaha al’aql) and turned it into a tyrant of modernity (tāghūt al-ḥadātha) (Abderrahmane, 2012, p. 462, n. 21) since it enforces oblivion of the divine (attansiyah or nisyān, or al-insā‘) (Abderrahmane, 2012, p. 466). It creates “a world governed by oblivion” (‘ālam nāṣī), in opposition to a “contemplative world” (‘ālam dhākir). The former is inhabited by a “horizontal man” who
conceives just what he sees, while the latter is inhabited by a “vertical man” who conceives also what he does not see (Abderrahmane, 2012, p. 14). Abderrahmane’s project of “Islamic modernity” uses the same plans, but innovatively, and makes the fusion of ethical reasoning and piety the axis of the project. In so doing, he claims to foster “continuous innovation” that preserves ties with the tradition (ibdaʿmawṣūl), instead of “discontinuous innovation” (ibdaʿmafṣūl) (Abderrahmane, 2006, p. 194).

The point here is that reason is not only an isolated part of the whole entity of man. Reason is not only that mechanical part that is invoked to categorize and differentiate items or components that man needs to analyse. Ordinary reason – or “abstract reason” – stops at this level of mechanical analysis. If European modernity has rationally pigeonholed human action in categories – and has thus led to differentiating morality from actual action, ethics from business, religion from politics, management of the world from the contemplation of the world and so on – the “second modernity” Abderrahmane proposes espouses reason to ethics and the latter to religion. I summarize this in the following format: religion = ethics = reason. The essence of human reasoning becomes religiously ethical. This link among the three is connected to the earlier interpretation that the majority (maturity) of man cannot be universally beneficial to him unless it is tied to the divine attributes of the good. Put differently, the ontological bond between the Creator and Creation, between the divine and the physical world through revelation finds its utmost resonance in man’s testimony to live the trust (amāna) that is fused in his capabilities to act in the world. That is, the natural, or original, trait of the spirit of man is good. Reason, religion or ethics is but a means to activate this good and channel it through for concretization. Religion is the ethical path that rationally seeks the good of man (Abderrahmane, 2000, p. 159). This makes his thesis that there is no ethics without work and vice versa, as further developed in his The Question of Doing (2012b) and The Misery of Secularism: Trusteeship Critique of the Separation of Ethics from Religion (2014). Accordingly, expanding the earlier format to include work is feasible: religion = ethics = reason = work/practice. What could be called “ethical doing,” which is ontologically a feature of the human being in this paradigm of thought, is what builds the human identity of “youth” (al futuwwa), which I position in this line of argumentation of this chapter – leaving critique aside here.
The “awakened youth” and the task of “double awakening”  

Abderrahmane uses the symbolism of youth to philosophize the political situation in the Arab world. Two points have to be noted before I proceed. First, he takes “youth” (al-futuwwa) to mean the existential highest form of humanity and existence, as if this stage of man is the most relevant in identifying his being and doing in the world. Therefore, “youth” here is seen as the most elevated stage of special cognitive human capacities that are universal and not only Arab-Islamic. Most important, and to connect this concept to his project of philosophical-political renewal and ethics, youth is taken to mean that higher stage where being and doing are inseparable from the format entities I reached earlier: religion = ethics = reason. Second, Abderrahmane seizes the occasion of the Palestinian Intifada of the youth in 1987 to build the concept philosophically politically. He concretizes his concept on the political attitudes of Arab politics towards the Intifada. This concretization helps in clarifying the concept but is not fundamental in this analysis. Rather, I take the concept to the Moroccan current political situation and see how far it can be applied to what is often referred to as “Moroccan exceptionalism.” While Abderrahmane takes the Intifada of 1987 to politicize his concept, I take the Arab Spring events that started in mid-December 2010–January 2011 for my inferences.

Abderrahmane uses the Arabic diction as the linguistic and cognitive container of three stages of “human nature” (al-khâṣṣiya al-bashariyya) in its development to the highest stage of humanity. This highest stage is called “al futuwwa” (youth), and the three antecedent stages, which are cognitive concepts too, are al-insâniya (humanity), arruǧūla (manhood, which is genderless), and a- murū’a (magnanimity). Succinctly, humanity is realized when “supported reason” – the third-highest stage of reasoning – matches the highest stages of ethical doing. Manhood is the upper stage/concept where the ethical characteristics of humanity are accumulated. Magnanimity is the third stage, when manhood ethical characteristics are achieved. Henceforth, the human being (al-insân) is lower in ethical-rational stage compared to man (arraġul), and the latter, in turn, is lower in ethical-rational capacities compared to the magnanimous (al-mar‘; Abderrahmane, 2002, pp. 173–176). If I bring Abderrahmane’s earlier three levels of reasoning faculty that merges ethics (abstract, supported and guided levels), I can say that the human being uses, or is characterized by, abstract reason; man uses or is characterized by guided reason; and the magnanimous uses or is characterized by supported reason. This said, what differentiates “al-futuwwa” (youth) from the previous three stages and concepts?

For Abderrahmane, “youth” is the most elevated sensation of ethics. It is the culmination of the three previous stages. It contains them all and is above them all. It is a metaphor of excellence and perfection on the following three levels: religious, power and doing (or work) perfections. First is
religious perfection (kamālu ḥattādayyun): youth is impossible without a religiously ethical message with which, and through which, it strives to develop its natural human features. While the human being (al-insān), as seen earlier, may be the first and lowest stage of rational ethics, youth (al-fatā) excels over the human in religiosity-rationality. While the human being may prioritize or prefer “abstract reason” over ethics and higher values, the youth always matches reason with ethics, which he considers of divine origin. While the human may develop his or her own humanism or humanist trends, the youth always brings forth the ontological bond between the human and the divine (Abderrahmane, 2002, pp. 176–178).

Second is power perfection (kamāl al-quwwa): the youth excels in various types of power manifestations over man (arraḡul). The utmost of these is physical power that goes along the ethical and rational powers. Abderrahmane cites the physical power of prophets as examples, such as the power of Abraham in demolishing pagan statues equipped only with his physique and faith in the ethical message revealed to him. While manhood may last with its ethical traits, its physical powers fade away with time, but youth remains in him despite old age. Still, the youth as a physical stage is better that manhood of old age, because it carries both physical and ethical power, while manhood carries just one (Abderrahmane, 2002, pp. 178–180).

Third is doing or work perfection (kamāl al-ʾamal): the youth excels in doing good to the extent that he or she exceeds an excellence act with another excellent one, and so on (īṭār al-īṭār). Consistency in doing excellent deeds and faithfulness to this excellence is what characterizes the youth and makes him or her, consequently, embrace of the characteristics of the magnanimous – the third stage of human nature’s excellence. The youth makes doing (al-ʾamal) the spouse of his supported reason and higher ethical values, namely supported ethics. For the youth, there is no work without ethics and no ethics without work (Abderrahmane, 2002, pp. 180–183) – recall Abderrahmane’s previous theory of ethics and the place of practice in it.

Here is the delicate stage: How is it possible to match these theoretical developments (of philosophical awakening) with the real political status quo in the Arab world (for political awakening)? In passing, I refer to the way Abderrahmane matches the “living nationhood” and the “awakened youth” with the Israeli–Arab (or, more narrowly, the Israeli–Palestinian) cause. I underline the previous note that Arab philosophical and political awakening has the right to exist. According to Abderrahmane, the threat to such an existence is philosophical and political external hegemony, led by the West in general and concretized by the Zionist project of Israel, a project that has espoused itself to the Judaic tradition. This note is to emphasize the idea that Abderrahmane is not distancing philosophical engagement from the political one. Without a philosophical project that is local or national, there could be no real political self-determination and realization of the liberation the “awakened youth” aspires to. It is only by understanding this philosophical engagement through “responsible question[s]” that the referred-to concepts can be understood.

Abderrahmane considers four political attitudes of Arabs towards the Intifada of the Palestinian youth. These political attitudes reflect four philosophical-ethical attitudes, and each of them matches one of the concepts referred to earlier. The first attitude towards the Intifada is that of “naturalization” of relations with Israel (attaṭbī’). According to Abderrahmane’s scale of ethics
(abstract, guided and supported ethics – which correspond to the three scales of reason) and the scale of a “living nationhood” (humanity, manhood, magnanimity, and the crowning stage of the awakened youth), the attitude of “naturalization” is the least ethical, least rational, least human and least national because it is defeatist and not liberationist. It accepts, to use an earlier concept used to awaken Arab-Islamic philosophy, the status quo, or ḥaqīqat al-wāqi’/fait accompli. Since it does accept such a degrading status, then this attitude is neither rationalist nor ethicist nor even humanist in the sense of giving the Intifada youth their basic human freedoms (Abderrahmane, 2002, pp. 183–184).

The second attitude taken by the Arabs towards the Intifada is that of “boycott” (al-muqāta’a). This attitude is ethically more adequate compared to the previous one. The boycott corresponds to guided ethics and guided reason concepts. It also corresponds to the manhood stage/concept of the “living nationhood” and ethical human nature. The boycotters take only a semi-ethical attitude towards the Intifada and Israeli–Arab conflict, according to Abderrahmane. While they are against the Zionist colonial and degrading expansion in the region, they are, however, not totally against the colonial project as such; the boycotters indirectly recognize the Zionist project and thus indirectly recognize that they remain under its hegemony (Abderrahmane, 2002, pp. 184–185).

The third attitude is that of “rejection” (rafḍ) of the Zionist project. The rejectionists of a colonialist and hegemonic project are the ones that have absorbed the highest stage of human nature in being free and living freely. Their attitude corresponds to the stages of supported ethics and supported reason. They understand that it is only through a liberationist attitude that they can live in peace and construct an independent state, with its own independent philosophical-political references. The rejectionists are magnanimous in their characteristics (Abderrahmane, 2002, pp. 186).

The fourth and final attitude is that of “the youth of the Intifada” who go to the streets and resist also physically the colonialist projects of the Zionist project, according to Abderrahmane. Youth then means “Intifada,” which goes beyond the three previous attitudes of naturalization, boycott and rejection. The youth’s attitude of facing colonialism and all it brings about in terms of restrictions of freedoms, racial discrimination and alienation with their bodies, through martyrdom (al-istishhād) and jihad, correspond to the highest level of ethics and reasoning (supported ethics and supported reason stage), where internal ethics and rational argumentation match doing, or work, on the ground. The youth have seen that naturalization, boycotting or rejection are not enough in facing the colonialist. The callers for the naturalization of relations with a colonial power are considered, in comparison, the least liberationists; on the contrary, they are mimetists and are happy with being followers. The boycotters, on the other hand, have not been able to match their ethics with deeds. The magnanimous are the closest to the attitude of the youth, except that the latter enjoy the three previous excellences: religious, physical and doing (or work) excellences. Youth is then the highest stage of awakening, thus the concept of the “awakened youth.”
Thought experiment: the “awakened youth,” the Arab Spring and the Moroccan case

What I do in this section is to tentatively read Abderrahmane’s concept of the “awakened youth” in the light of the so-called Arab Spring and, then, take the Moroccan case as an example. Before I do that, I make a few linguistic and political-philosophical notes on the interpretation that follows. First, there is an expression in Arabic that says “someone is in his or her springtime” (huwa/hiya fi rabi‘ al-‘umr), which means “he or she is in his or her peak of youth.” I take, then, the “Arab Spring” to linguistically mean the “Arab Youth.”

Second, because Abderrahmane has moved the term youth (futuwwa, instead of shabāb) from its linguistic domain to that of political philosophy, with an ethical load, I henceforth take the “Arab Youth” to be synonymous with philosophical and political awakenings, thus the possible name of “Arab Awakening” – as Tariq Ramadan calls the revolts, though with a sceptical tone of international conspiracy and doubts of engaged intellectuals.

Third, as noted earlier, Abderrahmane espouses Arab awakening to the ethical message of Islam. The Prophet Muhammad’s moment was the first realization of the Arab (Islamic) awakening on all levels. Now is the time for a second awakening. Moreover, Abderrahmane considers the Arab-Islamic Renaissance (nahda) of the 19th century a semi-awakening because it focused on the political liberation of most Arab-Islamic lands from European colonialism, and now is the time to complete this awakening through a philosophical awakening, which will materialize itself in full political autonomy again. Further than that, Abderrahmane considers that the philosophical projects attempted in the Arab world for the last few decades were/have been mostly unable to build a new philosophical framework and present a thorough critique of the dominant Western philosophy. He presents his project to fill in this gap.

Fourth, and most important, as a continuity to the previous point, I take it that the project of the “awakened youth” is both political and philosophical, and if one of them is achieved or semi-achieved, the rest has to be worked on, and the other fully worked on for completion of this “double awakening,” to call it so. In light of the events of the so-called Arab Spring, I assume, in this chapter, that neither the philosophical nor the political awakening is fully achieved – knowing that measuring philosophical/intellectual awakening is not easy unless it is the manifestation of this awakening in society that can allow a judgement. In the Arab world, these awakenings can be seen to be oscillating between tradition and modernity, between a substantially grounded reform and a gradual reform that appears unable to trace a clear philosophical-political vision or path – though reading such an oscillation as a choice of the peoples in itself may not be a wrong reading of it since societies do not change immediately and since change takes different levels, directions and times according to particular examined fields of social affairs. Henceforth, while I understand and endorse the overall point of Abderrahmane’s
philosophical-political awakenings, I consider the concept of the “awakened youth,” a process of reform and not a particular stage *per se* in Arab philosophical-political awakenings. So, if I use the “awakened youth” as an equivalent to the “Arab Youth” or the “Arab Spring” I mean by that the “Spirit of the Arab Youth” and not its actual manifestation. By this “spirit” (*rūḥ*) I mean the various philosophical and political projects that this “awakened youth” aim at achieving behind *doing* this “awakening” (*qawma* or *Intifāda*). This “spirit” is the result of the accumulated push factors behind the awakenings. Literally, then, it could also be right to say “the Awakening Youth” instead of, or besides, the (already) “awakened youth” – for the “*muttafiḍ*” in “*al-futuwwa al-muntafiḍa*” could be a description of the action as it happens right now or as it happens in a continuous form over a long time. Such an action cannot be void of philosophic-political weight in the Arab context, whose “renaissance-awakening” (in the sense of working for change) has been in process since the 19th century (since the *nahda*) at least. This is the major point I have been driving at in this piece about the Arab Spring. The second supportive point I have been driving at concerns the Moroccan case and its place in the “awakenings.” I turn now to this point.

Eventually, in this closing section, I use Abderrahmane’s framework to read the stage/place of the “awakened youth” in the Moroccan context. To do this, I refer to Abderrahmane’s views on what he calls the “Moroccan ethicist school,” and second, I use his earlier concepts to broadly evaluate the philosophic-political status of the “Moroccan Spring.” While I use Abderrahmane throughout this chapter to understand the Arab philosophic-political conception of the “living nationhood” and the concept of the “awakened youth,” I underline the idea that the rest are my own inferences and do not necessarily correspond to Abderrahmane’s current views on the status of the “Moroccan Spring.” I start with Abderrahmane’s two further points about the Moroccan ethical school and political ethics, with as few details as possible.

To begin with, in *The Arab Right to Philosophical Difference* (2006), Abderrahmane shows again his criticism of the Moroccan philosophical trends that he sees as mostly mimetic and less innovative in content and methodology. He is also critical of the influence of the French tradition and language on Moroccan philosophy (Abderrahmane, 2002, pp. 137–168). While he acknowledges the “unique” (*mutafarrid*) and prolific Moroccan contribution to contemporary Arab-Islamic philosophy, he still does not summarize this contribution *à la* al-Jabri’s “the future can only be Averroest” (Al-Jabri, 1999). To summarize the Moroccan and, more generally, Maghreb’s historical intellectual contribution only in reason as understood by al-Jabri is for Abderrahmane an “intellectual heresy” (*bid’a fiqriyya*), because al-Jabri’s reason is but the lowest category of reasoning in Abderrah-mane’s scale – recall abstract (the lowest), then guided and, finally, supported reason stage/category (Abderrahmane, 2000, p. 202).

Besides, Abderrahmane ends his work *The Question of Ethics* (2000) with reference to the contribution of the Moroccan scholars to the development of an ethical reading of the Islamic tradition. He refers to the Moroccan ethicist scholars who contributed to defending the Egyptian religious and political crises over the centuries. By this example, he defends the Moroccan “exceptional” approach to religion through ethical reason and not only reason or only ethics that is isolated from real life preoccupations. With his example, he refutes the “Jabrist” idea that the
Maghreb, and Morocco, in particular, is more rational than the Mashreq, which is illuminist and more influenced by self-centred spirituality and esotericism. He also refutes the idea that it is not true that the Mashreq is the centre, producer and distributor of Arab-Islamic thought, while the Maghreb simply a consumer. Abderrahmane situates the Moroccan scholarly contribution to Arab-Islamic tradition at the “exceptional” level of bringing reason and ethics into communion through what he calls “supported reason” and “supported ethics.” In summary, the Moroccan ethicists are characterized by three main features. One, they connect to inseparable levels ethics and fiqh. Moroccan ethicists are contextualists; they measure human reason with sharia reasoning and consider them as aiming at the same thing and are, consequently, not contradictory. Two, they merge their ethical theories based on their faith with their concrete work, or practice. While they believe, they also work for themselves, as life dictates, instead of being preoccupied with finding God through esotericism and leaving this world uncared for. Three, they dissociate themselves from politicizing religion by turning jihad and da’wa (proselitization) into a spiritual quest and work for social well-being, in general; jihad has been used in the defence of the territorial sovereignty of the country or Islamic lands when need be, without pushing to make of religion the primal preoccupation of the state affairs as long as the state does not breach the broad ethical premises that the community-society believes in. According to Abderrahmane, the adoption of the Malikite madhab (school of jurisprudence) in Morocco has been influential in shaping “Moroccan culture” (athaqāfa al-maghribiyya) through adapting the religious ethos to reason and context (Abderrahmane, 2000, pp. 200–222).
Conclusion

Having made these further notes, I now close this chapter with “grounded conclusions” of how to read the Moroccan Spring of 2011, based on Abderrahmane’s framework described earlier. These conclusions I summarize in the following notes.

First, the awakening in the Arab world has to be twofold: philosophical and political. Since the awakening in Morocco is part of the Arab awakening, it has to be both philosophical and political.

Second, philosophical-political awakenings in the Arab world are partially mimetic of Western philosophy and politics, or mimetic of the classical un-renewed Arab-Islamic tradition. Therefore, a modern awakening is not fully achieved yet both in philosophy and in politics. Since Morocco is part of this world, it also suffers from the same shortcoming.

Third, since Moroccan political history and culture enjoy a particular rational and ethical standing within the overall Arab-Islamic tradition, then it is quite possible that Morocco’s awakening could be unique also on the ground, politically. Henceforth, the Moroccan Spring can be unique (mutafarrid) and its “youth awakening” different, something that can be considered “exceptional” in both positive and negative terms (more on Morocco later).

Fourth, since the concept of the “awakened youth” is philosophically and politically the highest (aspired-for) stage of change in the Arab world, and since the Arab Spring current political events are still going on – with various horrendous repercussions, especially in countries such as Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen – it means that this stage is not easy to achieve yet, especially in these ruined countries. So, as I have briefly inferred earlier, what the Arab world, and Morocco, in particular, is experiencing is “youth awakening” or the “spirit of the awakened youth” – and this has not reached the stage of the “awakened youth,” in which philosophical and political awakenings are highly independent and successful. Literally put, the concept of the “awakened youth” is still “awakening” – in the sense of “rising up” in defence of a project – and is “evaluating” its achievements since the independence from European colonialism. In this sense, and to apply previous concepts to the current Arab philosophical and political situation (details and exceptions aside), it could be assumed that what has been achieved until now has not crossed the first stages of “living nationhood.” Having resisted direct colonialism, the post-colonial era could match the evaluation era in which various attempts to build modern Arab states (“living nationhoods,” to make an inference from the concept of “living nationhood”) have been tried with little success: the Arab Spring comes to revisit and further re-evaluate. Following this assumption, it could be said that the Arab Spring has not entered the third stage of edification and is still working on the “evaluation” stage. Accordingly, the Arab Youth revolts could be better named “youth awakening,” which is, again, assumed to be leading to the mature “awakened youth” stage (recall the three stages of the “living nationhood”: resistance [al-muqāwama], evaluation [attaqwīm] and edification [al-iqāma]).

Five, because of its philosophical exceptionalism through its concepts of “supported ethics” and
“supported reason” and because of its fusion of doing/practice with supported ethical reasoning, Moroccan thought, in general, and the Moroccan movement for change, in particular, may, consequently, be read to be politically working on the second strategic plan of “evaluation” (attaqwīm) to enter the “edification” (al-iqāma) third plan that characterizes the “living nationhood” (alqawmiyya al-ḥayya). I mean that it has entered the field of reformation smoothly, differently from the way other Arab states have done or are still trying to do, and the way ahead seems long before it achieves full “living nationhood” characteristics, imbued with the “awakened youth” features. To be more precise, Morocco could be said to be close to the edification stage only since its symptoms of “evaluation” (attaqwīm) are obvious, sometimes called “exceptional.”\footnote{17} This conclusion is supported by the following political observations (which cannot be detailed here). While I note these observations in the following, I also bring back again some of Abderrahmane’s concepts used earlier as a means of normatively measuring/evaluating the Moroccan case.

Morocco has been receptive of the Arab Youth demonstrations which started in December 2010 in Tunisia. The movement of 20 February in Morocco went to the streets to ask for socio-political reforms on 20 February 2011, and on 9 March, the monarch responded by calling for revising the constitution. This led to the adoption of a new constitution on 1 July through a referendum and legislative elections held on 25 November. About 73% of Moroccans went out and voted in the referendum for the new constitution, which was adopted by 98%. Some fraction of the 20 February movement boycotted the constitution and referendum, and so did the conservative movement Justice and Charity (al-‘adl wal ihssān), few small parties like The United Left (a-yassār al-muwahḥad), and few independent non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and associations of human rights. Overall, nationally, regionally and internationally, the way the state – a state in which the monarch still holds strong powers – has dealt with the Moroccan Spring is considered politically wise, smooth and a sign of will for change and democratization.

However, since the coming of the moderate Islamist Party of Justice and Development (PJD) party to the government, in an alliance with three other parties, political commentators on the Moroccan scene do not show overall satisfaction, neither does the governing coalition and the leading party itself. The PJD leaders would speak of “ghosts” and “crocodiles” in the political system that refuses change and fight of corruption; other leaders in the coalition speak of PJD dominance – or arrogance – in taking decisions in the coalition, while the opposition, made of parties that were in government before the Arab Spring, accuse the PJD of not fulfilling its promises for socio-political change. Independent NGOs, human rights activists, and Amazigh movements also join in the debate and speak of their dissatisfaction with how “things” still are. While they recognize that the Moroccan case is “different” and even better compared with the rest of Arab countries, intellectuals and political analysts still broadly see a lack of philosophic-political vision in the way the country is governed (by the elected government) and ruled-reigned (by the king).\footnote{18} To put it clearly, there seems to be no clear philosophical grounds for the political reforms Morocco is trying. Political thought in the country seems more adaptive than being innovatively grounded on some clear philosophical tradition (political philosophy in focus) of its own. The reforms the country has been trying are categorized as “exceptional” because they are
partially hybrid and vague, which slows down the pace of reform and the development of a modern state, or what has been called here “living nationhood,” with clear philosophical and political aims.

Henceforth, one can say that Moroccan exceptionalism, when both the philosophical and political domains are looked at together at the same time, is still in a transition period. It is in a middle stage between refusing awakening (change) and adopting it according to the weight of diverse stakeholders, some of whom may not be interested in any form of awakening. To apply the (1) three characteristics of “living nationhood” (i.e., [a] rising up [al-iqama], [b] evaluation [al-qiwām] and [c] awakening [al-qawma]), (2) the three stages that precede the “awakened youth” stage (i.e., [a] humanity [al-insāniyya], [b] manhood [arruġula], and [c] magna-nimity [al-murū’a]) and (3) the rational-ethical three stages required for this awakening (i.e., [a] abstract [muġarrada], [b] guided [musaddada], and [c] supported [mu’ayyada]), we can conclude, without further elaboration, that (1) when it comes to the features of the modern nation-state (in the sense of “living nationhood”), Morocco is still in the “evaluative stage”; (2) since the rule of law still does not fully reign and accountability measures have not found ways to the political agents, this means that the ethical and rational faculties of these agents are not “supported” nor, maybe even, “guided”; that is, the highest ethical norms that should guide the rational faculty and the agency of the political stakeholders are still missing for the realization of radical and genuine modern reform; the stage of “magnanimity” (al-murū’a) is not reached, and the “awakened youth” who enjoys the three excellences of “religion,” “physical power,” and “work” are not mature; (3) there is no supported ethics in politics, which gives space to corruption (al-fasād), and the latter cannot build a modern nation-state (a “living nation”) that is rationally ethical in its political philosophy. The so-called Moroccan exceptionalism has more “evaluations” to go through before it “edifies” its “exceptional” living nation.
Notes

1 I use ethics in both plural and singular form, depending on the context. Its equivalent in Arabic is *al akhlaq* and *al khuluq*, respectively. I do the same later with the term *youth* in “awakened youth” to mean “al futuwwa” (singular) and “al fityān” (plural).

2 While it is Abderrahmane who uses the term *philosophical awakening* (*qawma falsafiyya*), I infer the term *political awakening* (*qawma siyyāsiyya*) from his argument. I refer to the context of the argument in the following paragraphs.

3 Abderrahmane has separately defended the ideas of the Arab and Islamic rights to philosophical difference but has at the same time built strong ties between them. I reiterate the point that I am more interested in his concept of the Arab renewal, and I refer to his project of Islamic renewal only when need be, as in the case of enriching the concept of “living nationhood” with Islamic ethics.

4 Abderrahmane says that while he agrees with al-Ghazali on many issues, he denies being his follower because of the different reasons that make the two work on these same issues. For example, Abderrahmane says that al-Ghazali integrated Aristotelian logic into Islamic philosophy to defend it, while Abderrahmane does not integrate this logic or European modern ones but develops his logical utensils from various Islamic sciences, like *usul al fiqh* and language (thus his use of the term *fiqh al falsafa*, or “the essence of philosophy”). Also, al-Ghazali was critical of the limitations of philosophy, while Abderrahmane not only re-examines the role of philosophy (remember his idea of the “responsible question” in philosophy) but also calls for its awakening for national-political and religious renewal (thus his concepts of “*qawma falsafiyya*”/“philosophical awakening” and what I have inferred from his diction to be a “*qawma siyyāsiyya*”/“political awakening”).

5 Part of Abderrahmane’s project is to revive the linguistic ability of Arabic philosophy by means of coining concepts according to its grammatical structures and stylistic diction, and not through mere translations of external or imported concepts. He has devoted a number of books to the issue of translation and philosophy. See, for example, his critique of the dangers Moroccan philosophy has fallen in while mistranslating European philosophy from its (especially German) tradition by going through the French translation to reach the Arabic version.

6 Space limitations do not allow for elaborations on Abderrahmane’s approach to modernity. Summarizing his thought, it is possible to say that he distinguishes between two kinds of modernity as a way to find space for the right of difference to be exercised by Arab-Islamic thought. One is the “essence of modernity,” or the “spirit of modernity” (*rūḥu al hadātha*), and the other is the “fact of modernity” (*wāqi‘ al hadātha*). The latter manifests itself in the way it is realized by the West, which can be referred to as European modernity. The “essence of modernity” is based on three principles, and each of them is built on two pillars: (1) the principle of majority (*mabda’ arrushd*) and its two pillars of autonomy (*rukn al istiqlāl*) and creativity (*rukn al ibdā’*), (2) the principle of criticism (*mabda’ annaqd*) and its pillars of rationalization (*rukn atta‘iqīl*) and differentiation (*rukn attafṣīl* or *attafrīq*) and (3) the principle of universality (*mabda’ ashshumūl*) and its pillars of extensibility...
rukn attawasu’) and generality (rukn atta’ım). The “second modernity” is spiritual, religious friendly, pluralist and friendly to nature.

7 I translate qawmiyya as “nationhood” instead of “nationalism” because Abderrahmane is critical of the latter. The ideology of Arab nationalism of especially the mid-20th century, according to him, has been an imported idea to the Arab conceptual world without criticism and adjustment and without clear “philosophical awakening.” Abderrahmane offers two major criticisms to the failed Arab nationalism project: its focus on ethnicity and lack of focus on the element of language and its failure to make of ethical values its major pillar for genuine renewal.

8 Abderrahmane’s Arabic style is unique. The many new terms he coins oblige the reader who wants to translate him practice the same intellectual processing into the targeted language. The Arab or non-Arab reader who wants to translate him will have to bear in mind Abderrahmane’s translation methodologies for accuracy, to which he has devoted a huge volume: fiqh al falsafa I: al falsafa wa-ttarjama (The Essence of Philosophy – Vol. I: Philosophy and Translation; Abderrahmane, 1995).

9 I am translating the concept of al futuwa al muntafiḍa as “the awakened youth” instead of, say, “the revolting boyhood,” “the revolting youth” or “the rising youth” for three main reasons. First, al fatā in Arabic is closer to the meaning of ash-shāb than to al walad or aṭifl, taking the cognitive as well as the physical features of al-fata that are higher and stronger, respectively. These two features are stressed in the concept of alfutuwwa al- muntafiḍa; attufūla al-muntafida is neither able to “stand up” nor able to “reason” to bring about a philosophical-political awakening. As to ash-shabab al-muntafīd, while it may be closer in meaning, the term shāb is mostly a physical feature and not cognitive; thus, it is unable to carry the weight of especially the “philosophical awakening.” Second, Abderrahmane, in a note, prefers the term qawma, which I have translated as “awakening,” to the term revolution, as I have indicated earlier when introducing “qawma/awakening” third strategic plan of the “living nationhood.” I assume that Abderrahmane could have used the term al-futuwwa al- qā’ima, but he seized the occasion of the Palestinian Intifada to use the term al-futuwwa al muntafida, to bring closer philosophy to its “domain” (majāl) of political events, making of the philosopher a local philosopher first. Third, I am using awakening which finds echoes in the Arab-Islamic literature, more than revolution. Since Abderrahmane uses youth as the most elevated stage in human existential being and doing realizations, I have brought to mind the influential text of Hay Ibn Yaqdhān (The Living Son of the Awakened), considered the first Arabic novel and first philosophical novel, as an example of “awakening” that also Abderrahmane would, according to my understanding, envisage for his project. Hay Ibn Yagzan is commonly attributed to Ibn Tufail (d. 1185), but three versions of the work were also composed by Ibn Sina (d. 1037), Shihab Eddine Sohrevardi (d. 1191) and Ala’ Eddine Ibn Annafis (d. 1288). The same text influenced Daniel Defoe to write Robinson Crusoe in 1719. So, the awakening of the youth here is expected to be innovative at the level of the four major components or entities that I have come to see equal in Abderrahmabne’s project: religion, ethics, reason and work/doing. Overall, with these illustrations, I believe I am loyal to both the linguistic and cognitive aspects of the concept and project of “awakening” in my translations.

10 I drop the inverted commas of the used concepts once I assume that the reader has become used to them. I use them again later in the text as a way of emphasis, or as a reminder that they are concepts.

11 This does not distance the content of the “Arab Spring” as a political movement from the historical “Spring of
Nations” of 1848, and the “Autumn of Nations” of 1989 in Europe. The point is that while similarities are possible on the socio-political events, this may not necessarily be so on the linguistic terms. The latter may seem superficial differences, but they can be more than linguistic but cognitive. This allows for the study of each historical event in its political context and philosophical background, and with its linguistic equipment as much as possible.


13 I reiterate the fact that the Arab philosophical and political awakening envisaged by Abderrahmane does not totally distance itself from Islamic ethics, where liberty and justice messages are worked out in the ground through doing excellence. Though I have focused on Arab awakening here, I refer to the Islamic one too, when needed, because of its ethical contribution Abderrahmane considers universal and of paramount importance in the renewal of the Arab world that is mostly Muslim by practice or culture or both.

14 Abderrahmane has devoted a long methodological critique of al-Jabri, Averroes and their “mentor” Aristotle, as referred to earlier. The other Moroccan philosophers he refers to in this book without naming them are Mohamed Aziz Lahbabi (d. 1993) and Abdellah Laroui (b. 1933). He indirectly refers to the concept of “Muslim personalism” which is one of the works of Lahbabi and the historicist Marxist approach which is Laroui’s.

15 These three major features are mostly derived from the ethicists that he studies with reference to their impact on the Egyptian political and religious fields over the centuries and in particular periods, especially during the Fatimid caliphate and the time of its decline (r. 909–1171 AD).

16 Arab intellectuals and philosophers question what “post-colonial” means, considering the renewed military presence of external powers in the region. For example, the cause of Israel–Palestine is not solved yet, and it involves directly or indirectly most Arab states, especially the neighbouring ones, which renders speaking of a fully post-colonial region and area not factual. Added to this example is that of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, the current Russian and Iranian military presence on the Syrian ground, the Arab armies’ intervention in Yemen led by Saudi Arabia and the recent intervention of the Turkish one as well in Kurdish areas of Syria. This blurs the meaning of colonial–postcolonial.

17 It could be interesting to use the various concepts of the “living nationhood” and “awakened youth” and measure accordingly the reaction of both the Arab states and Arab streets to youth protests all over the Arab world. For example, the three concepts used to measure the reactions to the Palestinian Intifada as a moment of “living nationhood” can be applied, with adjustments, to the Arab Spring events, too. To recall some of these adequate concepts, I cite “naturalization,” “boycott,” and “rejection.” Henceforth, some countries would be said to have “naturalized” (i.e. embraced) relations with the Arab young protestants for the sake of change. This naturalization is smoother in Morocco, to which I return, and sophisticated in Tunisia and Egypt – to make general remarks in this limited space. Gulf countries, like Saudi Arabia, may be said to have “boycotted” the youth awakenings through early increases in salaries and promises of further socioeconomic measures that a small fraction of protestant youth and critics of the regime have called for. Algeria may be included in this category of “boycotters” of youth awakenings; it aborted their protests from the first days by giving certain promises, like increases in salaries. As to the cases of Yemen, Libya and Syria, the regimes that have governed these countries for three to four decades strongly “rejected” these protests and faced them with tanks. The damaging outcomes of these “rejections” are still not over yet, seeing the civil wars they have turned into.
Following this broad comparative description, a further study can use the three strategic plans of “living nationhood” to measure the level of awakenings in each state and society. These plans, to be recalled, are “resistance,” “evaluation,” and “edification.” The same can be said about the level of “humanness” (humanity, manhood, magnanimity) and “ethics” (abstract, guided and supported) in each political reaction. Such a work could construct a vision of new pathways for Arab political thought post–Arab Spring.

While the king, Mohamed VI, enjoys large popularity and respect for his reformist projects since 1999, there is still a large dissatisfaction about the monopoly of the royal palace of the market and strategic decisions and policies in the country. This dissatisfaction, when voiced by political analysts or ordinary citizens, is generally directed to the entourage of the monarch and not to him. This middle position of critiquing the monarchy but not the monarch, per se, stems from the large powers the king still enjoys within the new constitution, which does not make of Morocco neither an absolute monarchy nor a constitutional monarch (or a parliamentary monarchy as Moroccans like to call it). It is this middle position that will still be debated in the coming years while attempts of change keep being introduced on various levels and in different fields. The elected government will always find ways to accuse “invisible players” or “ghosts,” that is the “deep state,” when they face problems in advancing their projects. The monarchy will have to face this critique. For more on the Moroccan new constitution and the debate it has opened up, see for example Belkeziz (2012a, 2012b), Maghraoui (2011) and Hashas (2013).
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4
Reconciling Islam and pacifism

A traditionalist approach

Muhammad Haniff Hassan
Introduction

The commonality among Muslim scholars dictates that pacifism is incompatible with Islam. Absolute pacifism is generally regarded as haram (forbidden) for Muslims. The Qur’an and Hadith (Prophet’s tradition) obligate Muslims to perform armed jihad when faced with aggression to their territory, life and property. This chapter takes a fresher look at pacifism that relates to contemporary Muslim affairs and constructs possible arguments where absolute pacifism is possible for Muslims. There are two broad objectives of this study. First, it seeks to challenge the popular view in the spirit of ijtihad. Furthermore, it seeks to promote discussion and contribute to the existing corpus of works that is currently lacking on non-violence and, more specifically, pacifism in Islam.

It is hoped that the chapter would widen the discourse on Islam and war to one that goes beyond armed jihad, particularly among scholars of Traditional Islam. Also, jihad in Islam would not be simplistically compared, with the Just War Theory only, which justifies war (or armed jihad) as long as it fulfils certain moral standards in terms of motive (jus ad bellum), execution (jus in bellum) and termination (jus pos bellum), despite being terrible, destructive and bad. As a result of the adaption of this narrow perspective, academic works have seen a long list of studies comparing jihad in Islam with the Just War Theory. This phenomenon indicates a comfortable and settled position taken from academics outside the field of Islamic Studies that the former can only be understood through the lens of the latter. The reality is that Islamic scriptures are richer and should not be limited to this convenient position. A deeper look at Islamic scriptures reveals evidence that jihad can be understood not only as non-violent but also as a basis for Muslims who incline to live as pacifists. This chapter seeks to elaborate on this revelation and, in the process, enrich the existing corpus of knowledge in the study of Islam and non-violence.

Islam is not a monolithic religion. There are various strands of Islam practised by Muslims all over the world. In view of this, this chapter pertains to the perspective of traditional Islam represented by the majority of Muslims. To further clarify, traditional Islam refers to the understanding and practice of Islam that is based on the classical works. The classical approach is based primarily on three important sciences known as Usul Al-Fiqh (Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence), Usul Al-Tafsir (Principles of Qur’anic Interpretation) and Usul Al-Hadith (Study of Hadith). It is further underpinned by the works of the classical era. This refers to the classical works before the Muslim world entered into modern period (used interchangeably in this chapter as the contemporary era) which began during the period of colonization by European powers.

Also, Traditional Islam is not a monolithic strand of Islam. It has diverse sub-strands. Thus, it must be stated from the onset that there are differences of opinion between traditionalists on the issues covered by this chapter, that is morality in war, just cause for war and pacifism. The space here does not permit the capture of these different opinions. Thus, the term traditionalist (those who subscribe to Traditional Islam) in this chapter is to represent only the dominant view held by
the majority which has strongly influenced the understanding of most Muslims and their scholars, in particular with regards to Islam’s position on jihad and war.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part provides an overview of the concept, meaning and various types of pacifism. This is followed by an overview of the traditionalists’ view on war. The main focus of this chapter is delved into the third section, which offers arguments on how, through traditionalists’ terms, absolute pacifism can be compatible with Islam in contrast with the popular traditionalists’ stand.
Brief introduction to pacifism

Pacifism comes from the Latin word *peace*. It was coined by Emile Arnaud, a French statesman, in 1901 at the 10th Universal Peace Congress in Glasgow, Scotland. Originally, he used the word to describe the beliefs of those who urged the use of international law and diplomacy, instead of war, to settle conflicts among nations.\(^5\)

Pacifism can be used in a multitude of ways, and there is no one standard definition. It is an ideology that propagates peace, rather than violence or hostility, should govern human relations and that arbitration, surrender or migration should be used to resolve disputes.\(^6\)

Pacifism rejects the use of violence. Its proponents either oppose certain wars or all wars. In its strictest sense, pacifism means opposition to all forms of violence – even in self-defence – and is called non-resistance.\(^2\) A person who embraces pacifism is called a pacifist. A pacifist distinguishes him- or herself as being immensely confident in the peaceful resolution of any conflict, often earning the reputation as a “dove” or a “peacemaker.”

On one extreme, a pacifist denotes any person who desires peace, including those who wage war as well as those who refuse to participate in war. On the other extreme, pacifism describes renunciation of force and coercion in all forms. A moderate definition sometimes distinguishes non-resistance which renounces force in all forms from pacifism which rejects participation in war but allows the use of non-violent kinds of force. It makes more sense to reserve the term *pacifism* for this part of the spectrum, which includes at least a refusal to participate in war. Those individuals who refuse to do this are called conscientious objectors.\(^8\)

Pacifism is generally applied to cover nearly all non-violent attitudes towards war.\(^9\) For the purpose of this chapter, it would be sufficient to divide pacifism into two broad categories: Absolute Pacifism and Pragmatic Pacifism.\(^10\)

**Absolute Pacifism**

Absolute Pacifism argues that all forms of violence remain categorically wrong. It views that social intercourse should be completely non-violent and peaceful, and conflicts, which may arise, should be dealt through arbitration and compromise, rather than with recourse to violent means. It asserts that peace is intrinsically a good to be upheld that is more conducive to human welfare than any use of violence or force.\(^11\)

Absolute Pacifism argues that the evils procured by violence, force or war far outweigh any good that may arise.\(^12\) Even when threatened by aggressive opposition and retaliation self-defence should only be done through non-violent means.

Generally, Absolute Pacifism is founded on the belief of certain absolute moral principles.
Religion is also a common basis. Buddhism, in particular, decries war and advocates non-resistance. A few Christian sects such as the Anabaptist, Quakers, Moravian, Dukhobors and Mennonites have adopted non-resistance as a doctrine. For that reason, Absolute Pacifism is also known as Principled Pacifism.

**Pragmatic Pacifism**

Pragmatic Pacifism opposes war not on the basis of any absolute moral principle but on the basis that war is a category of violence, which is neither necessary nor acceptable. In its argument, Pragmatic Pacifism does not rely on religion or metaphysics. Although Pragmatic Pacifism decries war, it permits its use under certain circumstances. This may be because of the view that the duty to uphold peace and non-violence may conflict with the duty to save or defend lives against aggression, if the latter duty is accepted. The duty to uphold peace may be trumped by alternative ethical requirements. While wars generally do not produce more favourable results, in specific examples they may be acceptable, such as wars of self-defence or interventional wars to protect a people from genocidal campaigns. Such conditional pacifism usually bases their moral code on utilitarian principles – it is the negative consequences that make it wrong to resort to war or violence.

Another type of pragmatic pacifism includes those who only oppose war that may cause a devastating effect such as war involving nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. They view that such war is not “winnable.”

While positions which advise non-aggression under normal circumstances but reserve the right to self-defence under crisis is not pacifist in the ideal sense, they may be called more or less pacifist in a pragmatic sense, reflecting a generally strong commitment to the natural and nearly universal preference of peace over war.

Not all pacifists are passive towards political events. Pacifism has been known as a force behind many peace movements. In promoting the idea of pacifism and to prevent or stop war, pacifists use non-violence means such as peaceful demonstration, sit-ins, picketing, holding vigils, fasting and hunger strikes, blockades and civil disobedience. Some of its main proponents are Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.

**Intellectual and religious basis for pacifism**

For religious pacifism, the opposition against war primarily comes from the teachings of the religion founded on each respective scripture. For example, many Christian pacifists base their view on biblical teachings that command them not to physically resist evil, to turn the other cheek, to love the enemy and pray for those who do injustice to him and to respond to evil with kindness and forbidding revenge. Christian pacifism is of the view that revenge is forbidden and
vengeance belongs to God only.  

For Buddhists, the principle of the Right Action under the Eight Noble Truths prohibits them from killing any life, be it human or animal, and torturing and harming others are included as secondary actions in not killing.

As for Hinduism, at its heart is the philosophy that holds to the conception of a world in which individuals are separated from the whole, or from God. Desire and lust for the worldly things constantly hinder men from losing themselves in the reality which this world tends to hide or make obscure. War is seen as an element that will prevent the soul-substance of the human being from returning back to the whole (God). Thus, it must be resisted.

Most religious pacifism argues that life is sacred and a gift from God. No individual has the right to take it. This divine source of life, for the Christian pacifist, leads directly to the brotherhood of all persons and their divinely given purpose of living as God’s children. With every human being then either actually or potentially a child of God, no Christian may take the life of a fellow member of the family of God. The presence of the kingdom of God on earth similarly links all persons under God’s rule and therefore proscribes violence towards anyone.

Non-religious pacifism normally proceeds from various pragmatic and utilitarian arguments. They argue about the destructiveness of war, in particular in recent times because of the threat of nuclear arms, its contribution to widespread suffering and its failure to resolve conflicts. Thus, its avoidance serves the interest of humanity.

Some argue that peaceful resolution such as negotiation and mediation through international systems are more effective in promoting peace than war. They are also relatively less costly than running a war. Non-violent techniques attempt not only to prevent the outbreak of violence but also to move society, even if it is against its will, towards a more just disposition.

Most will also appeal that, based on rational thought or logic, the sanctity of human life proscribes war. Others view that the suffering endured by the pacifists will break the chain of violence and will touch the conscience of the oppressors and turn them into friends.
View of traditional Islam on war and morality

The traditionalist view towards pacifism is influenced by the basic belief in jihad fi sabil Allah (jihad in the path of Allah). A common stance among traditionalists on war is that it is permissible with conditions. The set of rules, commonly known as fiqh al-jihad or al-siyar (jihad jurisprudence) regulates the conduct of war which covers the purpose of war, the person who can wage and participate in war, the person on whom war can be waged and the fighting method in war.

All traditionalists hold that there must be a “just” cause for war. However, they differ whether a “just” cause is limited to defence against aggression, whether it is extended to spreading religion to non-Muslim territories or whether it is for a defensive purpose only or for both defensive and offensive reasons.25
Three premises of war

There are three broad premises for war. First, war is premised on morality as the essence of Islam. Second, war is a necessary evil for a greater good while peace is preferred. Third, there are clear rules on warfare in Islamic scriptures (the Qur’an and the Hadith).

Morality is the essence of Islam

Traditionalists hold that morality is one of the most important elements in Islam. It influences all aspects of Islam that seek to guide human conduct. Thus, nothing, including war, can be detached from it. Islam, according to traditionalists, regards morality as one of the objectives of Prophet Muhammad’s mission as he himself proclaimed, “I was sent to perfect the morals” (narrated by Malik). Accordingly, the perfect moral is enjoined upon Muslims by the Prophet in many hadiths, such as “The best of you are those who have the best manners/morals” (narrated by Al-Bukhari) and “Among the Muslims, the most perfect, with regards to his faith, is one whose character/morals is excellent” (narrated by Al-Turmudhi).

The standard of this moral was further crystallized by the Qur’an when it obligates Muslims to emulate the Prophet’s exalted character and morality in all aspects of life: individual, family, social, economic and political.

Thus, morality is a critical consideration in war for traditionalists, and Muslims are obligated to adhere to a certain code of conduct during war.

War is a necessary evil

Traditionalists argue that Islam does not favour war and violence as mentioned in hadiths: “Verily, Allah is kind and gentle, loves the kind and gentle, and confers upon the kind and gentle that which he does not confer upon the harsh” (narrated by Muslim and Ibn Majah) and “Indeed, kindness and gentleness does not exist in anything, without beautifying it; and it is not withdrawn from anything, without ruining it” (narrated by Muslim).

They also argue that the Qur’an requires Muslims to favour peace than war or conflict. Preference for peace and non-violence, according to traditionalists, can also be discerned from Islam’s enjoinment of restraint as in the following saying of the Prophet: “The strongest of you is not he who knocks out his adversary, the strong one is he who keeps control over his temper” (narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim).

A companion by the name of Abu Hurairah related that a man said to the Prophet, “O
Messenger of Allah, my relatives are such that I cooperate with them but they cut me off, I’m kind to them but they ill treat me, I forbear but they are rude to me.” The Prophet said, “If you are as you say, you are feeding them with hot ash, and as long as you continue as you are, Allah will always help you. He will protect you against their mischief” (narrated by Muslim).

A companion of the Prophet related that he (the Prophet) narrated the account of one of the prophets who was assaulted and wounded by his people, yet while wiping the blood from the face he prayed, “O Allah! Forgive my people because they do not know” (narrated by Al-Bukhari).

War and violence are not favoured as the Qur’an recommends Muslims to retaliate against evil with kindness. Traditionalists view that this is more preferred than retributive justice such as an eye for an eye because the Qur’an states that God prefers Muslims to forgive those who have done evil to them instead of retaliating in kind or violence even if they are legitimately permissible to do so. Despite the strong preference towards peace, traditionalists eschew absolute pacifism or unconditional prohibition towards war.

Traditionalists hold that Islam takes a pragmatic and realistic position towards war and conflict, as suggested by the Qur’an when it says,

And if your Lord had pleased, He would certainly have made all people a single nation, but they shall continue to differ. Except those on whom your Lord has mercy; and for this did He create them; and the word of your Lord is fulfilled: Certainly, I will fill hell with the jinn and the men, all together.

(The Qur’an, 11:118–9)

In the story of Prophet Adam’s two sons (Qabil and Habil), the Qur’an seems to suggest that conflict and war are constant features of humans’ life when from the earliest periods of human life in this world, an individual murdered another: “So the Nafs (self) of the other (latter one) encouraged him and made fair-seeming to him the murder of his brother; he murdered him and became one of the losers” (The Qur’an, 5:30).

And when the Prophet said, “There will always be a group of my followers who will fight for the truth, till the Day of Resurrection” (narrated by Muslim), it brings to a point that war will continue in human life until the end of the world. Accordingly, this is related to the Qur’an’s suggestion that life is a constant battle between evil and good.

For traditionalists, the necessity of war despite its negative character can be clearly understood from the Qur’an when it permits Muslims to fight war in order to stop oppression, uphold justice and defend sacred places. It is in this context also – to preserve justice and repel evil – that God will always raise a group of people to fight because sometimes those who promote evil go to the extremes such as war and aggression. The constant conflict between good and evil as a permanent feature of human life would also mean that fighting is always a necessary option and that war can only be regulated, managed and minimized.

A regulated war
There are scriptures that clearly require Muslims to observe certain rules in war. These rules imply the need for war to be conducted in strict adherence to Islamic morals and that Islam neither seek to ban war nor permit total or unconditional war. The broad principle for regulating war is provided by the Qur'an when it says, “Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits” [emphasis added].\(^39\) These limits are explained by the Prophet in various hadiths.

Based on these scriptures, traditionalists rule the impermissibility of killing and targeting certain categories of people such as women, children, monks, serfs and the elderly in a battle unless they participate in it. Traditionalists agree on the specifics of these categories.\(^40\) They also made restrictions on the targeting of properties, trees, farms, cattle and buildings, unless out of necessity or in the interest of war determined by the authority.\(^41\) They forbid torture and abuse of prisoners of war\(^42\) and mutilation of a dead enemy.\(^43\) Taking cognizance from the Prophet’s prohibition of the use of fire as a method of killing, traditionalists seek to ban certain types of weapon that may cause indiscriminate or disproportionate destruction in war.\(^44\)
Traditionalist and pacifism

Traditionalists’ understanding of Islam highlights many similarities between Islam and pacifism. Like pacifism, traditionalists strongly believe that Islam abhors the killing of a human being and regards killing and murder as major sins. This is discerned from the fact that the Qur’an imposes severe punishment in this world and the afterlife for murderers and that God has made killing an innocent life, “as though he had slain all mankind.” According to traditionalists, the prohibition on the killing innocent lives is applicable equally upon Muslims and non-Muslims.

Also similar to pacifism are the traditionalists’ attitude and view towards war: that it is primarily evil and negative and that peace, restraint, kindness, compassion and peaceful da’wah (propagation) should take precedence and exhausted first.

However, traditionalists also differ fundamentally from absolute pacifism. They do not agree with and cannot condone the total ban of war propagated by absolute pacifism. In addition to the argument mentioned earlier about war as a necessary evil, the traditionalists’ disagreement with pacifism is largely based on the idea that jihad is central to the teaching of Islam, it cannot be abrogated by any person and it should remain an Islamic obligation for Muslims till the end of the day.

Traditionalists claim that not only does Islam permits war; Islam also makes it obligatory for Muslims in certain circumstances in the name of jihad. Although jihad does not necessarily mean fighting with arms, all traditionalists would agree that armed jihad is one of its meanings. Traditionalists view jihad as obligatory either in the form of fard kifayah or fard ‘ayn. The former is a duty that is sufficiently fulfilled by some Muslims whereas the latter must be performed by a Muslim individually. Jihad is fard kifayah in the context of maintaining an army as security against external aggression and is fard ‘ayn when a Muslim land is invaded or when a person is specifically mobilized for jihad duty by a Muslim authority.

The centrality of jihad in Islam, according to traditionalists, departs from the stand made by the absolute pacifists as the Qur’an gives a strong command with regards to the performance of jihad and issues strong condemnation against those who refuse to perform it. To support their position, traditionalists also highlight the following hadiths as examples: “Jihad is the pillar and pinnacle of Islam” (narrated by Ahmad). “There is no hijrah (migration) after the opening of Mecca but there is jihad and intentions; and if you are called to fight then fight” (narrated by Al-Bukhari). “The Messenger of Allah was asked, ‘What is the best act of worship?’ He said, ‘Believing in Allah.’ He was asked, ‘And then what?’ He responded, ‘Jihad in the path of Allah.’ Then he was asked, ‘And then what?’ He said, ‘An accepted Hajj’” (narrated by Al-Bukhari).

That armed jihad is a command for Muslims therefore means, to traditionalists, that Islam does not teach total non-violence or non-resistance as propagated by absolute pacifism. As such, agreeing with absolute pacifism would mean subverting armed jihad obligation in Islam.
Traditionalists regard this as a clear disputation against the clear statements and injunctions of the Qur’an and hadiths. Absolute pacifism would also lead Muslims to abandon jihad that the Prophet has warned against in several hadiths: “If you deal in usury and hang unto the tails of cows, being satisfied with cultivation and ceasing to take part in jihad, [emphasis added] Allah will inflict a humiliation upon you which will not be removed until you return to your religion” (narrated by Ahmad). “Whoever dies and has not fought or had the intention of fighting dies on a branch of hypocrisy” (narrated by Al-Nasa’i).

As the basis for the traditionalists’ main disagreement with absolute pacifism is on the total ban of war that contradicts the shari’ah of jihad, it can be concluded that pragmatic or limited pacifism as illustrated in the preceding section is acceptable in Islam. In fact, the large majority of traditionalists’ stand towards war is akin to Pragmatic Pacifism that regard war as the last and necessary resort after all peaceful means to conflict resolution have been exhausted.

**On pacifist verses**

Two verses from the Qur’an support pacifism. First, the verse “Even if thou lay thy hand on me to slay me, I shall not lay my hand on thee to slay thee: behold, I fear God, the Sustainer of all the worlds” (The Qur’an, 5:28). The first verse contains the statement of Habil (Abel) in response to Qabil’s (Cain’s) threat to kill him out of jealousy for perceived favour and privilege given to the former by their father (Adam) and Allah. The verse clearly relates to pacifism when Habil expressed his refusal to retaliate with violence in the name of self-defence.

Most traditionalists sidestep this verse when discussing restraint or jihad. Nevertheless, based on traditionalists’ methodology and line of thinking, it could be argued this verse is not a validation for Absolute Pacifism that commands non-violence and disbandment of war. First, the context was based on a threat made to an individual, whereas war concerns public interest. War, in general, falls under public domain and concerns the threat to life, property and security of a community, nation or state and not just an individual person. Using this verse to delegitimize war that would have serious ramifications as it utilizes an inaccurate analogy. Second, Habil’s act represents “shar’ man qablana” (the shari’ah of a past nation). Traditionalists hold that the shari’ah of a past nation found in the Qur’an has no legal effect if it goes against any revelation to or the Sunnah (words and deeds) of Prophet Muhammad with the latter’s shari’ah being the final shari’ah that prevails above past revelations. In this regard, Habil’s act contradicts many verses of the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet.

The second verse is

And the Jews say, “God’s hand is shackled!” It is their own hands that are shackled; and rejected [by God] are they because of this their assertion. Nay, but wide are His hands stretched out: He dispenses [bounty] as He wills. But all that has been bestowed from on high upon thee [O Prophet] by thy Sustainer is bound to make many of them yet more stubborn in their overweening arrogance and in their denial of the truth. And so We have cast enmity and hatred among the followers of the Bible, to last until Resurrection Day; every time they light the fires of war, God extinguishes them; [emphasis added] and they labour hard to spread corruption on
earth: and God does not love the spreaders of corruption.

(The Qur’an, 5:64)

This verse implies God’s commandment not to start a war, to stop it and to regard it as forbidden corruption on earth, which signify the essence of Absolute Pacifism. While traditionalists would agree on all the points as illustrated in the preceding section, they reject the conclusion that the verse calls for the total ban of war. The verse, from a traditionalist standpoint, does not in any way say that wars should be banned. Putting this verse together with verses on jihad, it could be argued, for traditionalists, that the Qur’an permits the use of war for the purpose of stopping aggression started unjustly by others as exemplified by the Prophet, who best explains the Qur’an. Similarly, the verses on jihad are regarded as the explainer on the methodology of stopping unjust war that is absent from the second verse.
Traditionalist and pacifism reconciled

This section attempts to construct an argument to reconcile Islam and absolute pacifism proving that both are compatible based on the traditionalists’ terms. To illustrate the compatibility of Islam and Absolute Pacifism, three hypothetical scenarios can be utilized: first, a scenario where there is an international convention on a total ban on war; second, a scenario where absolute pacifism is a specific state’s ideology and national policy; and, third, absolute pacifism as a personal choice. The use of hypothetical scenarios for the purpose of generating religious ruling is common in classical works of jurisprudence for the discussion and formulation of a *shari’ah* ruling.

Global ban on war

War is already internationally forbidden as manifested in the UN Charter. Nevertheless, the charter which regulates the conduct of states provides exceptions. At an international level, there is the possibility of a legitimate war and one most common example of it is the war of self-defence which refers to the right of a state to wage armed resistance, that is war when faced with aggression or threat of aggression to its territory or sovereignty. The existence of an international law to regulate the conduct of war points also to the existence of an internationally legitimate war. However, the exceptions that limit the act of war and the international law to regulate it do not fall squarely with Absolute Pacifism that denounces the total use of violence and demands a totally non-violent or peaceful approach even in the face of violent aggression.

It cannot be said, however, that the current international legal regime on war is of no value. Its existence is a positive progression from the period where a war of aggression was merely a tool of foreign policy and not internationally regulated.

Pacifism can be argued to be compatible with Islam on the principle held widely by traditionalists that armed jihad or war falls under the jurisdiction of a political authority. From a classical viewpoint, this authority refers to a caliph. In today’s context, however, most traditionalists would accept a leader of a Muslim country as the *de facto* authority on the matter. In this regard, traditionalists assert that the authority has discretionary power, guided by conditions stipulated by the *shari’ah*, to declare war, enter into peace agreements, enter into a war pact or alliance, cease armed hostility and organize armed forces and all other matters related to both the broad strategy and specific conduct of war, that is dealing with prisoners of war, punishment for espionage and other misconducts.

Thus, it could be argued that entering into an international convention that bans warfare as held by Absolute Pacifism is well within the traditionalists’ existing principle on war and peace.
Furthermore, the principle held widely by traditionalists to legitimize this scenario is the validity of *ijma'* (consensus) as a source of Islamic jurisprudence. Although the traditional understanding of *ijma'* refers to the consensus of scholars on religious ruling, its application can be widened here to give legitimacy for consensus by Muslim rulers. Since traditionalists agreed that matters of war and peace lie with the Muslim rulers as long they comply to rulings stipulated by the *shari’ah*, it could be argued that when rulers of Muslim countries agree to enter into an international agreement for the total ban on war, it carries the same effect of *ijma'* by Muslim scholars as the authority in religious matters. This act cannot be absolutely said to be contrary to the *shari’ah* because, as argued by traditionalists, Islam always prefers peace than war. Thus, when the whole world inclines for peace via an agreement to ban warfare, being part of such agreement is in line with the fundamental spirit of Islam as explicitly mentioned in the Qur’an. This has become more significant from the fact that, in the issue of war and peace, the consensus of political authorities of the modern nation-state system adopted by most Muslims, which includes the scholars, carries more weight than the consensus of Muslim scholars. Relating to the principle of *ijma’*, if it is obligatory to uphold a ruling based on the scholars’ *ijma’* (a small group of Muslims who represent the authority with regards to religious issue), it is more so to uphold an *ijma’* of the whole world to totally ban war.

Traditionalists hold that anything that would cause great harm to Islam and Muslims is forbidden. In this regard, it could be argued that adhering to this global consensus is a *shari’ah* imperative because the opposite would risk Islam and Muslims being put to face the wrath of the whole world and treated as global pariah similar to Nazism or apartheid.

The principle held by traditionalists on matters of war and peace is the sanctity of an agreement that binds Muslims when their rulers entered to it as found in many verses of the Qur’an. In this regard, if total ban of war is incorporated to the UN Charter in a manner that automatically binds all its members, all Muslim countries and, as a result, the subjects of those countries are obligated to uphold the ban by default of their original membership with the UN, unless they choose to withdraw the membership.

The Qur’an commands Muslims that “[i]f they [enemy at war] incline to peace, incline thou to it as well, and place thy trust in God” (The Qur’an, 8:61). Some traditionalist scholars view that this command implies an obligatory duty (*wajib*). Therefore, it could be argued that to incline to peace by participating in the global ban on war is in line with this command. If accepting a peace gesture from a hostile enemy is commanded, it would be logical to deduce that it is more so if it comes from non-hostile international community.

To further support the validity of this scenario, a comparison can be made between the traditionalists’ position towards the global ban on slavery which is currently in effect and the suggested global ban on war. Table 4.1 provides an illustration that the arguments put forth here to justify absolute pacifism’s position – a global ban on war – has many similarities with traditionalists’ position on the issue of slavery and its ban globally.

Any traditionalist of sound mind would not argue that a global ban on slavery goes against Islamic teaching because, in the absence of evidence of abrogation, the permission should stand, and such a ban is against the explicit injunction of the Qur’an. It is not difficult to think of
negative effects on Islam and Muslims, if Muslim scholars would go against this international convention and maintain the permissibility of slavery or, worst, seek to continue its practice in the name of Islam.67

Based on the table also, it could be argued that global ban of war is not without precedence and not unfamiliar to the traditionalist school. Thus, it should not be regarded as an aberration from Islam.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1 Comparison between global ban of slavery and global ban of war</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Global Ban of Slavery</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Islam permits slavery (only because it was widely practised but seeks to gradually abolish it by encouraging Muslims to free slave and imposing freeing a slave as punishment for certain transgression of sharfah).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Islam promotes and prefers freedom of man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Islam dislikes slavery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Permissibility of slavery is never explicitly abrogated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• However, a global ban of slavery is upheld because it is compatible with the spirit of Islam that recognizes individual freedom and dislikes slavery.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Absolute Pacifism as a state policy**

This second hypothetical scenario refers to a situation where a Muslim state chooses to adopt absolute pacifism as the state policy or ideology in the absence of a global ban on war. It is akin to the policy of neutrality adopted by Switzerland. By taking such a position, the Muslim state announces to the world its renunciation of war where it will not use violence or war as a “continuation of policy by other means,”68 participate in or contribute to it, even if it is internationally recognized as stipulated by the UN Charter.

Like the global ban on slavery, this scenario can be supported from the principle of war being a matter of a Muslim authority’s discretionary power; it holds the power to declare war, cease it, enter into a peace treaty and adopt neutrality. Adopting Absolute Pacifism as a policy is just an
extension to this power.

However as a state policy, it would mean that the position is a political one based on maslahah–masfsadah (benefit–harm) calculation recognized by traditionalists on matters that fall under siyasa shar‘iyah (public policy). It is not a theological position that war is renounced because, in today’s context, it is ruled as haram (forbidden) in Islam. In the absence of ijma’ of Muslim scholars, Muslim authority or global community as in the global ban on war scenario, such theological position is untenable in traditionalist methodology.

Another traditionalist position on war that would support this scenario is the view that jihad is originally a fard kifayah. It only becomes a fard ‘ayn (individual obligation) when a Muslim country is invaded, when there is general mobilization (nafir ‘am) by the authority or when a person is specifically conscripted to military service by the authority’s power.

This is relevant here because, in the context of a fard kifayah, a Muslim has an option of not participating in it as long as the obligation is fulfilled by others. Thus, as long as the majority of Muslim countries are committed to fulfilling the duty of armed jihad (as stipulated in international law on war and conflict being members of the UN and signatories), a Muslim country or a minority of them opting for non-participation in any war should not be regarded as a neglect of an Islamic duty that makes this scenario forbidden in Islam.

To support this position further, it must be highlighted again that absolute pacifism here is not tantamount to non-resistance to or passivity in the face of injustices or oppression. It would only mean that any resistance and action against injustices (i.e. oppression, transgression or aggression) on self and others is done through other legitimate non-violent means. A pacifist Muslim state can still play an important part in upholding justice as commanded by Islam. In fact, in today’s context, one could say a pacifist state is not necessarily less effective than those who utilize violent or military means.

Furthermore, most hostility at the international level requires multifaceted solutions that are economic, diplomatic, political and military. As such, it could be argued that a pacifist Muslim country, when actively contributing against such hostility, is merely focusing or specializing in non-military dimensions of the solution. Putting its contribution into the whole picture, it could not be ruled that being a pacifist state is forbidden because it is tantamount to neglecting Islamic injunction to establish justice or stop hostilities.

To better understand this scenario, one can apply it to the case of the Palestinian struggle for an independent state and freedom from Israel’s occupation. It is internationally recognized that Palestinians’ armed struggle against Israel is a legitimate right for two reasons: (a) to resist Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestinian’s land and (b) self-determination, that is to have an independent Palestinian state. Theologically, there is no disagreement among traditionalists that armed jihad is obligatory in this context and that Muslims are commanded to contribute not only towards the freeing a Muslim land from illegal occupation but to also return Al-Aqsa Mosque, regarded as a Muslim’s third holy land, back to Muslim rule.

A Muslim pacifist state in this context may not contribute to Palestinian’s cause militarily and avoid any involvement in armed resistance but it contributes in other non-military or non-violent aspects of the cause such as supporting all diplomatic efforts and humanitarian assistance which
may not necessarily be less important or effective. The military aspect of the struggle, however, is left to Palestinians themselves and contribution of other states.

**Absolute pacifism as a personal choice**

This third hypothetical scenario refers to individual Muslims who choose to be absolute pacifists while living in a conventional Muslim state with no global ban on war as in the first scenario. Although armed jihad falls under the authority’s power, traditionalists recognize an individual’s right to make a personal decision on the matter – whether to participate or not or in what form they should participate.

Although traditionalists empower the authority to make armed jihad as *fard ‘ayn* to individuals through general mobilization or conscription of selected group of people, it must be done with valid justification. This justification must be for the purpose of attaining public *maslahah* that is greater than an individual’s right of choice as specified by *fiqh* maxims, "*tasarruf al-ra‘i ‘ala al-ra‘iyah manut bi almaslahah*" (the authority and jurisdiction of the leader over the people is made conditional on the enhancement of public welfare) and "*al-maslahah al-‘ammah muqaddamah ‘ala al-maslahah al-khassah*" (priority should be given to general rather than specific *maslahah*) and not to the whims of the authority.\(^{72}\)

If armed jihad, according to traditionalists, is, first, a *fard kifayah* as mentioned earlier, it could be argued for the purpose of validating this scenario that an individual is free to choose whether to be part of the group that fulfils the obligation or those who choose otherwise to the extent where he is also free to be neutral or a conscientious objector at a personal level. However, two conditions must be fulfilled if this is to fall within traditionalists’ methodology: (a) The individual, by choosing to be a pacifist, should not rule that armed jihad has become prohibited or abrogated. Both are forbidden according to traditionalists because the former prohibits what is commanded by the Qur’an and there is no evidence of abrogation for the latter. Also, according to traditionalists, no human being has the power to change God’s clear injunction.\(^{73}\) (b) Like the preceding scenario, a Muslim pacifist here must remain committed to contributing towards establishing justice and eradicating evil or hostility via non-violent/military means because passivity or silence in the face of evil goes against the Qur’an’s command of enjoining good and forbidding evil.\(^{74}\)

The option for an individual Muslim to not participate becomes more pertinent here if one is to consider some classical scholars’ view that the principal ruling on jihad is *tatawwu‘* or *nadib* (non-obligatory/encouraged) when there is no fear of hostility, although this is not a popular view.\(^{75}\) Also, *fard kifayah* with regards to national defence, most Muslim countries today, is fulfilled by non-conscription professional armies.\(^{26}\) Thus, in a normal situation, there is no necessity to demand commitment for military service from every single Muslim citizen or proscribe absolute pacifism, theologically or politically, as a personal choice.

The choice to be a pacifist is from the position that Islam provides wide latitude, flexibility and options for Muslims to combat injustice or hostility. Armed jihad is just one of many options.
Similar to the preceding scenario, choosing non-violent/military means without denouncing violent means is a form of specialization in contribution. At most, they are weighed to be more effective, bringing more *maslahah* (benefits) or causing less *darar* (harm) than the violent/military ones.

Of all three scenarios, an individual pacifist is in the most vulnerable position when facing a conventional Muslim authority that may demand its subjects’ commitment to defend the country when under threat or to obligatory military service. A Muslim pacifist in this situation may face prosecution for refusing military service. He may also face theological sanction for having a deviant understanding of Islam and, as a result, face social discrimination from the larger Muslim community.

The arguments for Absolute Pacifism put forth in this chapter indicate that the state authorities should not be quick to take oppressive measures against its pacifist subjects. As highlighted, a Muslim pacifist argued in this chapter neither seek to abandon his commitment to defending the country nor subvert the authority’s power to utilize a military option for self-defence. He can still contribute to other non-violent aspects of national defence. Instead of prosecution, the authority will do well by channelling them to numerous areas such as civil defence, medical service or even non-combat duties within the armed forces that suit his personal belief, and in the process, the authority shows tolerance and commitment to freedom of belief as espoused by Islam.
Concluding remarks

The chapter argued that absolute pacifism can be compatible with Islam, even from a traditionalist view. By offering possibilities where absolute pacifism applicable at an international level, at a state level and at an individual level, there is scope for a more rigorous and healthy discussion on the themes of absolute pacifism in Islam.

Although the applicability of pacifism at the international and the state level is far-fetched in the near future; it is unlikely that the current international community would absolutely ban war in favour of non-violence when in conflict. Currently, there are a few states which profess universal neutrality. These states maintain military forces for self-defence and approve the use of force solely for the purpose of maintaining of domestic law and order, thus making them nonpacifist states. Therefore, the likeliness for a pacifist state to emerge is unlikely for now given the increasingly uncertain international climate.

The real practical value lies at the individual level. The arguments in the chapter provide comfort for Muslims who incline to practice pacifism at a personal level without being burdened by a sense of guilt. It is hoped that when the validity of the arguments presented in this chapter is widely accepted by Muslims at large, an open attitude towards Muslim pacifist will become an integral part of the mainstream Muslim community.

Admittedly, issues such as absolute pacifism in an Islamic contemporary context will inevitably yield significantly divergent degrees of conservatism among traditionalists. Highly conservative traditionalists would naturally find difficulty in accepting the arguments put forth by this chapter. The litmus test of validity and acceptance of the arguments put forth does not lie within a broad consensus. The validity is assessed on two points: (a) whether the arguments are supported by adillah shar’iyah (shari’ah proofs) recognized by traditionalists and (b) whether the methodology used to interpret and apply the adillah is in accordance to the traditional approach towards religious issues. This chapter has satisfied both these criteria.

Any disagreement or contestation by scholars does not necessarily delegitimize a religious view that has been put forth. Most traditionalists’ views on religious issues are often bereft with contestation or disagreements. Traditionally, as long as a view is supported by the sound application of adillah shar’iyah and follows the recognized methodology, it is regarded as a matter of ijtihad that must be respected.

It is pertinent to frame the discussion of contemporary Islamic issues away from absolute poles of halal versus haram. Within matters of Islamic jurisprudence, fiqh, the maxim where there is to be no condemnation in areas of ijtihad – la inkar fi masail al-ijtihad (no condemnation in areas of ijtihad) – applies.

In this regard, this chapter also hopes to at least shift the discussion on the topic from an issue of halal, that is the upholding of jihad, versus haram, that is the absolute denial of jihad, as an obligation to a position where disagreements are accepted and the principle of “agreeing to
disagree,” like many other religious issues, can be upheld by all parties. This would open the door for a Muslim pacifist to be embraced as part of the ummah and not condemned as a heretic or deviant.
Notes


2 Traditional Islam refers to an understanding of religion which is upheld by a strict adherence to the religious interpretations of traditional scholars, namely scholars in the first 500 years since Muhammad’s Prophethood.


11 Moseley (n. d.), (Online).

12 Ibid.


15 Moseley (n. d.), (Online).

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid. See commentary on major differences between Absolute and Pragmatic Pacifism and how pacifism was modified from its absolute to pragmatic form, in Tamar Hermann (1972), “Contemporary Peace Movements: Between the Hammer of Political Realism and the Anvil of Pacifism”, *The Western Political Quarterly* 45:4, pp. 875–883.


20 Roman, 12:19–21; Deuteronomy, 32:35.


This phrase is the simplest traditional way of referencing a hadith (the Prophet’s tradition). It means that the hadith could be found in the book of hadith compiled by the mentioned scholar(s) for verification. Also, the mentioning of the narrating scholar(s) is to give some degree of confidence to the authenticity of the hadith. An elaborated form of referencing hadith is to follow a standard citation style. However, the standard style will utilize lots of words from the allowable word count that are better used for the main content.

See the Qur’an, 33:21, 68-4.


See the Qur’an, 7:199, 15:85, 3:133–134, 41:34.


See the Qur’an, 22:39–40.

See the Qur’an, 2:190.


8:1, pp. 20–23.


45 The Qur’an, 5:32, 6:151 and 17:70.

46 See the Qur’an, 5:32.

47 Muhammad Al-Ghazali (2005), Huquq Al-Insan Bayn Ta’alim Al-Islam Wa I’lan Al-Umam Al-Muttahidah, Cairo: Nahdat Misr, pp. 46–47.


50 Ibid., 1:507, 527–531.


52 Al-Jawziyah (1992), vol. 3, pp. 5–6, 8.


56 See the Qur’an, 9:24, 38–39 and 81–82.


58 See The United Nation Charter, Article 1, 2, 33 and 39.

59 See Ibid., Article 51.


63 See the Qur’an, 8:61.


66 Al-Qaradhawi (2010), vol. 2, pp. 785–792.
67 Ibid. See also Al-Qaradhawi (2010), vol. 1, p. 82.


70 See Ibid., vol. 1, p. 129.

71 See Ibid., pp. 63–87.


76 See Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 76–79.

References


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Several writings have tackled Islam and International Relations (IR) in an attempt to highlight the Islamic worldview and normative foundations in understanding world politics. Islamic paradigm is seen as a non-Western explanandum in contrast with dominating explanatory power of Western IR theories. However, alternative approaches and analytical frameworks are gradually becoming a central piece in contemporary IR literature. Many writings underlined the Islamic paradigm as a philosophical thought that has not engaged or interacted with Western IR theories. They highlighted its shortage in tackling epistemological, normative and methodological deficiencies in Western theories’ ability to understand the different international practices and phenomena in an ethnically and culturally diversified system.

This chapter presents an Islamic IR theory that engages with the existing Western theories and presents complementary ontological and epistemological premises through the lens of constructivism. In doing so, it expands on Sayyid Qutb’s “hakimiyya,” or governance, and Ahmet Davutoğlu’s “alternative paradigms” as Islamic theoretical concepts that are surgically conceived based on constructivism’s main components: collective identity, common interests, shared knowledge and practices, as formulated in Alexander Wendt’s and Emmanuel Adler’s works. First, the chapter highlights the singularity of the constructivist approach in allowing the integration of culturally diversified paradigms in IR. Second, it examines scholarly writings that had addressed the possibility of introducing an Islamic IR theory and their shortcomings in developing an Islamic one, which engages with the existing core theories. Third, the study introduces Sayyid Qutb’s (1906–1966) and Ahmet Davutoğlu’s (1959–) worldviews as an Islamic IR theory based on constructivist premises in order to add a complementary framework on the ontological and normative levels to the existing IR theories.

The methodology is based on the analysis of the works of Sayyid Qutb and Ahmet Davutoğlu, who provided an Islamic alternative worldview in IR. It examines how, through their writings, they have denounced the ontological, normative and practical foundations of Western civilization and how this negative perception has shaped their reaction towards the Western domination of
world politics. Also, it shows how both authors formulated their operational concepts as an immediate response that has to be adopted by Muslims in order to end their dependency on the global order and Western hegemons.

The chapter highlights concepts that were epistemologically conceived based on constructivist premises. The importance of addressing both authors stems from their engagement with Western theories as a complementary approach, ignited collective identity and common interest among Muslims and incited them to adopt an Islamic framework of shared knowledge and practice to counterbalance Western domination. Yet, Qutb and Davutoğlu manifested stark differences. Qutb’s criticism of Western civilization was triggered by a religious dogmatic view that looked forward, establishing an inward-looking Islamic nationhood while repudiating all non-Islamic aspects in life. However, Davutoğlu contemplated Western civilization as a political paradigm that needs to be complemented by an Islamic normative framework in order to have a just world order.
Constructivism in international relations

Based on Adler’s and Wendt’s writings, constructivism presents an interpretive framework for analysing world politics from culturally different perspectives. It focuses on the interaction of four main components in the formulation of IR reality: collective identity, common interests, shared knowledge and practices that are interconnected through inter-subjectivity. This section focuses on the presentation of these four components and their inter-subjective nature.

Constructivism relies on the role of ideas in IR and poses itself as a middle ground between rationalist and interpretive approaches in analysing world politics (Adler, 1997). It emphasizes a different ontological nature of IR as a discipline by taking into account various ideas as distinct normative and epistemic interpretations of world affairs’ reality. While rationalist approaches focus on the objective and material ontology of world politics and relativists on subjective ideas that act within structural constraints, constructivism focuses on the role of commonly shared ideas and “interests” in the formulation of international phenomena. Unlike rational and interpretive approaches that don’t give a central role for ideas in defining world realities, constructivists consider that states’ – social agents – behaviour, “identity” and “interests” are socially constructed by collective meanings, understandings and interpretations they attribute to the world (Adler, 1997).

By recognizing the effect of socio-cognitive factors on understanding world affairs, constructivism attaches a considerable importance to “meanings” given to reality by social actors, known as “inter-subjective knowledge” that shapes world reality the way they understand and know (Adler, 1997; Wendt, 1992). It consists of collective understandings that interpret reality for states and nations and give them instructions on how to act. Adler believes that the material world shapes and is shaped by the human capacity to learn and to understand based on normative and epistemic interpretations of the material world. These interpretations formulate a collective understanding that indicates how people perceive themselves and the existing reality and use their abilities and power. IR is, accordingly, constituted of social facts on which there is a common agreement. Therefore, constructivism emphasizes the ontological reality of “inter-subjective knowledge” and its epistemological and practical implications on states’ behavior, in general, and foreign policy, in particular.

According to constructivists, ideas are the collective knowledge that constitutes individual/state motivation for action in terms of defining what is possible and what is not and lead to the development of “practice.” Actions based on collective knowledge incite individuals to act purposively in light of their judgements, beliefs and convictions and lead to the institutionalization of knowledge through “practice.” For this reason, constructivism acknowledges the role of both ideas and interests not only in shaping social reality but also in influencing the formulation of existing structures in the international system. Instead of solely focusing on how structures influence individuals’ “identity” and “interests,” it gives importance to
the role of individuals and social agents in socially constructing structures (Wendt, 1995, 1987). Social structure is constituted of a set of “practices” perpetuated by individuals or states which act as social agents in the implementation of actions based on their judgements and beliefs. Thus, the nature of the international system and the world order is not an exogenous given. States’ “identities” and “interests” are taking part in interstate interactions, influenced by “their practices” and shape their worldview. The international system structure is not exclusively material but also socially established through “practice” where social relationships, “shared knowledge” and “practices” play a considerable role in influencing states’ “interests,” “identities” and behaviour.

As for “inter-subjectivity,” it underlines the presence of routine practices that are commonly shared by a group of individuals/states who participate in their production. Based on Karl Deutsch’s words in explaining security communities, “inter-subjectivity” exists because of the presence of a shared communication environment where individuals/states understand others and are understood in terms of sharing values and mutual responsiveness (Deutsch et al., 1957). In other words, Karl Popper elaborated more on “inter-subjectivity” by indicating that the ontological reality of “inter-subjectivity” is due to the expression and materialization of a subjective feeling, idea or thought into a discourse, a language or an action (Popper, 1982). Such thoughts and ideas are imposed on an entity or a group of people so that they would act accordingly. For that reason, material capabilities acquire importance in foreign policy analysis only because of the meaning they acquire through the formulation of “shared knowledge.”

According to Anne Finnemore, people act in a way they are called for based on a set of norms and regulations in a cultural and historical context (Finnemore, 1996). They do things for reasons that are socially constituted by collective interpretations they give to the world and rules they act on. Based on constructivism, the national and systemic contexts constitute IR reality in which states exist as social agents and act based on their “identity,” which is their self-perception, and “interests,” namely their aspired goals in world affairs. IR reality is, thus, socially constructed based on states’ “shared knowledge” that is perpetuated by an established “practice” in their foreign policies. Thus, constructivism enables the integration of different IR paradigms from diverse analytical and normative frameworks into the existing realm of theories.

By relying on constructivism’s main pillars of analysis: collective identity, common interests, shared knowledge and practices, this chapter formulates an Islamic paradigm based on both Sayyid Qutb’s and Ahmet Davutoğlu’s operational concepts, al hakimiyya and alternative paradigms, respectively.
The Islamic paradigm as an alternative to Western theories in IR

This section shows that, although many writings have introduced the Islamic paradigm as an alternative approach to IR, they didn’t develop a theoretical or an operational framework that interacts with the existing dominant theories. Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan emphasized this deficiency by underlining the need for developing non-Western IR theories since the source of dominant theories doesn’t correspond with the structure of IR subjects; it speaks only for specific nations and expresses their purposes (Acharya and Buzan, 2010). They complained about the absence of non-Western approaches, including the Islamic one, with operational concepts that can be generalized as a complementary tool of analysis in IR.

In response to Western domination in IR, some scholars underscored Islam as a superior worldview to the Western approach, which aims to conceal structural and normative deficiencies in the world order. For example, Amr Sabet considered Islam as a possible reference in IR that, by formulating its episteme through adaptation, imitation and hybridization, presents a different foundation of behaviour, truth and good life than that of the West and its teleologies, notably the nation-state (Sabet, 2008). He added that, facing secularism and the modern liberal project, as two preconditions for development, Islam constitutes an ontological and epistemological paradigm based on religion, faith and morality. Unlike the Western approach that is approved as a common system of knowledge in the international order, the Islamic reference is based on a distinct historical view and alternative principles rather than power and materialism.

In spite of underlining Islam’s superiority, Sabet asserted the absence of an IR Islamic theory in response to systemic changes that empowered Western domination. He distinguished between Western and Islamic paradigms by underscoring their socio-historical differences and indicating that Islam offers a world vision instead of incarnating a unique socio-historical process of development. In spite of its incompatibility with current politics, Sabet referred to Islamic traditional and original sources to indicate that Islam has a predetermined legal vision of the international order as a world divided into two abodes: one of Islam and another of war. In analogy to the Westphalian peace agreement creating the Christian community versus the Ottoman Empire, the Islamic world vision establishes a centrality for Sharia based on the Umma in terms of dealing with Muslims and their lives. However, the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, colonialism and the emergence of nation-states disturbed power balance in favour of the West. They limited the Muslim world reaction to either modernity integration or rejection and eliminated any possible authentic response in terms of elaborating an IR theory.

In support of Sabet’s argument about the absence of an IR Islamic theory, Sharbanou Tadjbakhsh confirmed the possibility of creating an Islamic paradigm for understanding world affairs (Tadjbakhsh, 2010). He indicated that, by focusing on the nature of Sharia as an internal
legal system, its externalization to the international level raises the question of incompatibilities between the Western and Islamic paradigms on the normative and ontological levels. According to Tadjbakhsh, in light of the Islamic paradigm’s static nature, it is essential to develop a process of conceptualization for changing Islam from “an object” to “a subject” of international relations. This is to make the Islamic paradigm, as a set of normative and cognitive beliefs about world reality, an explanatory framework in IR on the basis of a strategic vision and an influential cultural narrative emanating from the nation to justify or condemn international practices.

He added that there is a possibility for developing an Islamic paradigm in IR based on Islam rationalization. It consists of the Islamization of knowledge and the conceptualization of social sciences in order to develop alternative religious concepts and achieve compatibility between Islam and reason. It is a sort of Islamization of modernity in a post-modern perspective that goes beyond the strict Western conception of world order, in order to renew Islam’s concern of morality, good life and ethics without ignoring Western rationality and materialism. By having recourse to Western tools to islamize knowledge, information is relocated, rearranged and reconsidered for the enrichment of the discipline and the resuscitation of religion. By emphasizing Islam’s morality, normativity and purposes, the aim is to link Western knowledge to the main purpose of human existence as defined by the Creator. This will be through a methodology that goes beyond positivism and breaks with epistemological imperialism. According to Tadjbakhsh, knowledge must be related to ethical and metaphysical values for guidance, and it is for that reason that Western paradigms have to be deconstructed to determine discontinuities and opportunities in progress, modernity and rationality and to re-introduce religious knowledge.

This type of knowledge would link the senses, reason and faith through the consideration of empiricism, rationality and intuition, respectively, in order to establish a new scientific paradigm. Accordingly, Tadjbakhsh indicated that, by considering senses, divine sources and idealism, a synthesis emerges between the ideational and empiricism, which enables the introduction of Islam as an IR paradigm. He assumed that, only through this methodology, scientific reason and human sovereignty would be challenged. Also, thanks to this methodology, religion would be conceived as a human affair affected by time, space, history and morality that define life purpose, faith, self-protection and community consciousness.

Nassef Manabilang Adiong has also underlined the possibility of integrating an IR Islamic paradigm into the existing Western theories (Adiong, 2013). He supported this argument by giving the example of the English school that integrated Christianity in conceptualizing IR. He considered this example as an indication of the possibility of doing the same with Islam by presenting ontological propositions and developing an appropriate epistemology that would enable Islam to be integrated into an existing IR theory. Along with other scholars, he presented a wide array of scholarly writings emphasizing how some Muslim scholars and politicians adopted Islam as a distinct source of values, fundamentals and practices with regard to international relations’ phenomena and realities (Abdelkader et al., 2016).

While previous studies presented extensive analysis about the necessity and the possibility of developing an Islamic IR theory that complements the dominant Western sources, they presented Islam as a unique political thought without developing an Islamic conceptual framework that
interacts with Western theories. In the subsequent section, this chapter sheds the light on how Sayyid Qutb and Ahmet Davutoğlu managed to conceal this deficiency by constructing Islamic operational concepts based on constructivist premises.
Towards an Islamic IR theory: “al hakimiyya” and “alternative paradigms”

This section examines Qutb’s and Davutoğlu’s Islamic worldview that provides operational concepts for IR based on four components borrowed from constructivism: collective identity, common interest, shared knowledge and practice. Both thinkers are addressed together because of their argumentative and normative sameness in addressing international relations. Before tackling their contributions, the national and international contexts that influenced their views are explored first.

**National and international context**

Starting with Sayyid Qutb, Egyptian national politics and bipolarity in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s played a major role in shaping Qutb’s views. With Qutb being an Arabic teacher and a journalist for a liberal newspaper before joining the Muslim Brotherhood, his inclination towards mixing Islamic jurisprudence with politics was rarely observed. Although his remarkable shift towards Islamism was attributed to his experience in prison during Gamal Abdel Nasser’s rule (1954–1970), Qutb’s visit to the US for studying schools’ curricula from 1948 till 1951 constituted a turning point that has strongly shaped his intellect and ideological reference (Bouzid, 1998). This visit ignited a rigorous Islamic consciousness in him that dominated his passion for poetry, literature and politics in his writings. From 1948 onwards, Qutb’s writings addressed Islamic thoughts in all walks of life in an assertive and unapologetic tone rejecting all aspects of Western civilization and calling for an immediate Islamic reform. This visit brought to his mind the necessity of reconsidering the premises of Western civilization in light of the post–Second World War economic and socio-political changes, ideological polarization between the communist and capitalist camps and the prevailing consumerism and materialism that marked Qutb’s consciousness.

After joining the Muslim Brotherhood in the early 1950s and the interruption of the short-lived political cooperation between Nasser and the Brothers, Qutb’s political thoughts have remarkably emphasized the unbreakable tie between Islam and politics, notably in establishing an Islamic ruling (Mahomed, 2016). After an assassination attempt on Nasser, the regime carried out a large wave of mass arrests among the Brothers’ high- and middle-ranking figures who were condemned to prison and some of them to death. In 1954 and 1965, Qutb, alongside thousands of Brothers, was sent to prison for being charged with plotting against national unity, conspiring with British colonizers and leading threatening underground activities in an attempt to control wide grass-roots support for the Brothers. From 1965, Qutb was imprisoned for the second time.
and tortured until his execution in 1966. During his imprisonment, Qutb emphasized the centrality and superiority of the Islamic model as a religious, moral and legal order in many of his writings. In *Social Justice in Islam* (1948), *Problems in the Western Civilization* (1951) and *Signposts in the Road* (1964) Qutb has criticized Western civilization. He underlined the “destructive” nature of Western civilization materiality and its “deprivation” of morality as manifested during the Cold War and the bipolar confrontations.

Also, torture in Nasser’s prisons had a non-negligible effect on the formulation of “al hakimiyya” as demonstrated in Qutb’s book *Signposts in the Road*. Not only did this experience lead to a strong resentment towards the West but also favoured the metamorphosis of a strong Islamic belonging and ideological reference in all walks of life, notably politics (Bouzid, 1998). In this book, Islam was presented as an antagonist worldview and ideological reference to the materialistic Western civilization. It was underlined as the best solution that every nation, including the West, has to opt to in order to end with the state of war, man’s sovereignty and materiality that are ruining humanity around the world.

Alongside Qutb’s commitment to the formulation of an Islamic paradigm, Ahmet Davutoğlu presented another attempt at producing an Islamic worldview in IR. Brought up in the conservative city of Konya in Central Anatolia, Davutoğlu developed an academic career as a political science scholar in both Malaysia and Istanbul on which he built an expertise in IR (Gözaydın, 2013). This background equipped him with the necessary tools to develop a critical Islamic IR approach acting as an alternative worldview in world affairs.

Davutoğlu’s contribution was strongly influenced by instabilities in Turkish politics and the post–Cold War unipolar order. With regard to national politics, being from a conservative background, Davutoğlu and his political views were strongly influenced by the dominant secular–Islamic dichotomy in Turkish politics. For him, not only did this dichotomy prevent the crystallization of a democratic system in Turkey, but it also deprived the country from investing its geopolitical and economic assets in the formulation of an active foreign policy (Davutoğlu, 2001). His academic expertise and critical views towards the army domination on national politics paved the way for his affiliation to the Justice and Development Party (JDP), the ruling party with an Islamic background, and his appointment as a diplomatic advisor to both the president and prime minister in foreign affairs since 2002.

On the other hand, the 1990s constituted a turning point in the formulation of Davutoğlu’s alternative paradigm as a worldview inspired by Islamic norms (Davutoğlu, 1993). During this decade, the Islamic–secular polarization led to successive governmental instabilities and the post–Cold War order produced a power vacuum in world politics, asserted US hegemony and entrenched the third world marginalization. The end of bipolarity was manifested by the disintegration of the Soviet Union into independent countries, the independence of Central Asian Republics, the East European shift towards Liberalism and the eruption of conflicts in the Balkans where Muslim minorities live. In response to these changes, in 1993, Davutoğlu wrote a book titled *Alternative Paradigms: The Impact of Islamic and Western Weltanschauungs on Political Theory*. In this book, he formulated an Islamic worldview to reconsider the domination of the Western normative and legal premises on the global order and to include Muslim countries at the
centre of world affairs. Following this book, Davutoğlu called for the reconsideration of Turkey’s foreign policy and the development of an active diplomacy reflecting the essence of alternative paradigms. In 2001, he wrote Strategic Depth: Turkey’s Role and Position on the International Scene, where he presented a vision for the investment of Turkey’s vast geography and rich history in the formulation of an active diplomacy on the regional and international levels.

Since the JDP ascension to power in 2002, Davutoğlu formulated a Turkish foreign policy in accordance with an Islamic worldview, referred to as “Neo-Ottoman principles.” Based on his critiques of Western civilization’s “dominant” normative foundations and “unjust” practices, he denoted the importance of rectifying the normative and legal deficiencies of the global order. Also, he underlined the necessity of adopting an Islamic civilizational paradigm through the implementation of strategic depth in Turkey’s foreign policy (Davutoğlu, 2001). Strategic depth manifests a Turkish–Islamic synthesis, highlighting the importance of the Islamic culture and norms in enhancing Turkey’s position on the international level. Besides, it considers the Ottoman legacy as the main source of its relations with neighbours on the regional level.

**Identity and interests in an Islamic worldview**

Both Qutb’s and Davutoğlu’s contributions created an inter-subjective worldview that reflected an Islamic collective identity and highlighted a common interest in adopting an Islamic paradigm to ensure a better position for Muslims in world politics. Their emphasis on the presence of an Islamic collective identity emanated from a dual consciousness that triggered common interest in establishing a communitarian Islamic worldview as an alternative IR theory. The first one is the assertion of Islam’s cultural and normative superiority over the existing civilizational norms and the second is the awareness of the negative aspects of the Western domination in IR both as a discipline and a practice. Their point of departure in highlighting collective identity and common interest was their emphasis on the “superiority” of Islam as a normative and legal framework in opposition to the domination of Western civilization in contemporary world politics. For them, there is a common interest in adopting Islam as an emancipatory framework that liberates Muslim nations and individuals all over the world from the vices of Western civilization and its dominant aspects.

In this regard, Qutb posed Islamic civilization as the sole model of development that would claim cultural and normative superiority over Western paradigm. He considered Islam as the righteous, divine and perfect system for any society in contrast to the Western model as indicated in his books *the Battle between Islam and Capitalism* (1951), *Islam and Universal Peace* (1951), *Social Justice in Islam* (1948) and *Islam and the Problems of Civilization* (1962). In these books, notably *Islam and the Problems of Civilization*, he depicted Western civilization as a deteriorating model that led to humanity’s destruction and moral degradation. He questioned the ontological foundations of Western civilization by denouncing the domination of science as a positive normative paradigm of development. He asserted that science is an ontological foundation with limited ability in explaining the reason for existence. Because of its material nature, lack of
morality and adoption of deduction as a methodology for reasoning, Western civilization is not able to depict the world’s transcendental aspects such as human beings’ nature, mission and psychology, in addition to the origin of existence. He added that materialism, as a dominant feature in Western civilization and a founding basis of its epistemology in deducing regulatory norms, has suppressed humanity. It prevented the West from keeping up with changes and understanding the different humanitarian needs and universal aspects. In Social Justice in Islam, Qutb asserted this assumption and warned against dominant materiality in Western civilization that is, according to him, reflected in the struggle between communism and capitalism over power since the end of the Second World War.

In his book Alternative Paradigms, Davutoğlu highlighted the ontological and epistemological contrast between the Islamic and Western models of civilization in their perception of space, time, man’s relation to knowledge, nature, God and others. Accordingly, civilizations are classified in the following prototypes: strong and rigid, strong and flexible, strong and local, weak and rigid and weak and flexible. By identifying the Muslim and Western civilizations to a strong and flexible prototype and a strong and rigid one, respectively, Davutoğlu underlined the need for an Islamic approach that acts as an alternative paradigm in order to enrich the global order premises and inspire states’ foreign policies.

According to Davutoğlu, the international practice is influenced by the Western unequal perception of space that distinguishes between a privileged centre and a submitted disadvantaged periphery (Davutoğlu, 1993). This distinction marginalized the Muslim community through various control mechanisms, such as exploitation, opportunity hoarding, emulation and adaptation that sustained differences among nations. The US hegemonic order led to the entrenchment of a binary structure in international relations: the intra-textuality versus the extra-textuality that reflected two distinct worlds with different hierarchical relationships. The first refers to Western societies dominated by liberal assumptions emanating from their self-referential paradigm, and the other is the Muslim world dominated by realistic assumptions imposed by the global order exigencies. The self-referential standards of the European model of state maintained this inequality by controlling access to the source of values and to solutions for problems on the basis of a categorical system of closure, exclusion and control. It resulted in categorical institutions, such as the Convention of Human Rights, peace treaties and gender empowerment provisions, as submissive tracks that reduced states’ capacity of choice and power. In opposition to this “unfair” conception of space, Davutoğlu indicated that by considering the Muslim civilization norms, the notion of space would gain a more homogeneous and egalitarian dimension.

In opposition to the Western linear view of history, Davutoğlu introduced Islam as an alternative vision. While Western civilization claims its monopoly over time based on its achievements in science, technology and other fields, the Islamic civilization asserts that man has no influence on time but deploys the necessary effort to improve his condition. In his article “Conflict of Interest: An Explanation of World Disorder,” Davutoğlu criticized Fukuyama’s end-of-history theory and its tenets about the supremacy of European values by underlining their inability to adapt to religious and ethnic diversities and sensitivities (Davutoğlu, 1998). He added
that man’s relationship to knowledge in the Muslim civilization is not based on one source. Unlike Western civilization, which solely relies on science in the interpretation of world reality, the Muslim civilization acknowledges the complementary relation between revealed (faith-based) and rational knowledge. Following his condemnation of the Western domination on IR theories and politics, Davutoğlu emphasized the necessity to consider the norms and traditions of the majority of people in the world who don’t live in the West and to develop a complementary framework that conceals the global order’s deficiencies. He advocated for the reconsideration of the international order institutions, especially the UN. The aim is to develop collective security mechanisms that effectively deal with what he called “the global powers adventurism strategy” and to ensure peaceful coexistence among different cultures and ethnicities without domination.

Man’s relationship to nature in the Muslim civilization is based on the responsibility to protect, which is, according to Davutoğlu, different than the West’s, which legitimizes man’s domination and exploitation of nature. As for man’s relationship to God, it is integral and harmonious in the Muslim civilization as human self-perception is inseparable from God’s perception (Davutoğlu, 1993). However, this is no longer the case in Western civilization where state substitutes for divine centrality in the individual’s self-perception, lifestyle and worldview. In this regard, Davutoğlu developed a further critique of the modern state as the main material premise of Western civilization. For him, challenging modern state through the production of an alternative paradigm is related to the fact that IR theories are based on modern state speech and practices that limit political action. They resulted in an unjust international order based on the respect of sovereign states as a colonial strategy of encirclement in a challenging global order where what is applied to Western states is not to others, notably Muslim ones. Therefore, states, by adopting the Islamic paradigm, should be able to disseminate moral and religious values, influence the global structure and adapt to its provisions. Starting from the national level and the contestation of the modern state foundations, Davutoğlu called for a change in the systemic order on the political, economic and social levels in order to enhance its organizational structure in terms of resource allocation and attainment of favourable conditions. As a result, interchangeability follows between the abandon of absolute power in space management and nonterritoriality as a strategic and geopolitical reality that increases state capacity to exceed the system limits and to introduce new principles.

As for the relationship between men, Davutoğlu asserted that Western civilization doesn’t grant equal status to all individuals contrary to Islam, which perceives all human beings on one ontological equal status in the absolute. He added that this inequality in Western civilization is reflected in the global order where Western nations have privileged political and economic status and adopt biased policies vis-à-vis other nations (Davutoğlu, 1993). Accordingly, the New World Order established since the end of the Cold War has solidified the US hegemony, stigma-tized cultural and civilizational differences and monopolized them. Islamic threat has been manipulated by the US and the Western world to justify cultural domination and ensure the persistence of the established order. According to him, this order was reluctant to deploy the UN’s collective security mechanisms to prevent ethnic cleansing against Muslim Bosnians in Europe. For Davutoğlu, this reluctance showed to what extent the West welcomed ethnic cleansing against
Muslims in Europe, which incited him to criticize the ideological categorizations propelled by the US favouring Western civilization over the rest of the world.

**Shared knowledge and practices**

Qutb and Davutoğlu emphasized the presence of a collective Islamic identity tied to a communitarian consciousness of Islamic superiority and the drawbacks of Western domination. This incited a common interest for developing an alternative Islamic paradigm in IR. Both thinkers presented an Islamic worldview as a shared knowledge that provides a practice for Muslim societies in resistance to Western domination through the introduction of two operational concepts “**al hakimiyya**” and “alternative paradigms.”

Qutb developed “**al hakimiyya**” as the operational concept of his theory about man, society and knowledge. He conceived this concept as a normative framework that constitutes a “shared knowledge” among those who seek salvation and ultimate happiness. To achieve this aim, **al hakimiyya** incites people to follow human instinct “**fitra**” by obeying God’s commands as a permanent “practice” to move from the ignorant “**jahili**” society in which they live to the moral order of the Muslim society (Qutb, 1964). Denying the progress of knowledge from antiquity to the revelation era, Qutb criticized Muslim societies of his time by comparing them to the pre-Islamic order of “**jahilliyya**,” where the absence of God’s worship and disobedience to divine teachings led to the prevalence of an immoral and vicious society. In this regard, he presented **al hakimiyya** as a model vision of Islamic governance based on the rule of Sharia where the ruler is only abiding by the Islamic jurisprudence to establish a just order.

Qutb conceived the notion of **al hakimiyya** based on his theory of man, society and knowledge that articulates the “practices” that have to be followed to create and sustain an obedient Muslim society. For him, man has an instinct “**fitra**” that compels him to accept the reality of belief by acting out the word of God as revealed in the Quran and transmitted by the Prophet’s sayings and the “**Sira.**” Thus, it is through **fitra** that man would understand himself and his nature. By respecting these instinct impulses, man would reach a balanced state of happiness since by following God’s regulations and norms, man will act good towards nature and will not violate it. From the idea of respecting **fitra** stems man’s freedom of action according to the all-encompassing will of God. As a result, individuals’ will become the means for fulfilling and implementing God’s will and creating a society of believers where man can reach the ultimate level of happiness.

By asserting in *Signposts in the Road* that the moral and religious rejuvenation of any society is the only way for its salvation, Qutb articulated the “Islamic solution” for setting the right course for every nation. He emphasized Islam as the true universal order that ensures a balance between materiality and spirituality and indicated that the civilizing mission is dedicated to all mankind for nations’ salvation. For the development of an Islamic society, the growing Islamic community has to be isolated from the prevailing **jahili** order where nominal Muslims live in nominally Muslim countries with nominal Muslim rulers. Once this community grows stronger, it has to
struggle for the implementation of the Islamic norms in society. In contrast with *Social Justice in Islam*, where Qutb called for a gradual reform and change, in *Signposts in the Road*, he called for a struggle against sedition *fitna* through the cultivation of right religious belief, the removal of obstacles in the way of fulfilling oneself and exhortation. He asserted that the establishment of an Islamic order won’t happen unless society adopts the means of original success, which are the use of human capabilities to follow divine instructions and their fulfilment by any means. Thus, man has to follow *fitra* through the belief in his conscience and action to accomplish the human mission on earth as the caretaker of God’s creation since belief incites man to act towards definite goals in compliance with God’s instructions.

Qutb also conceived Islam as a form of revolution “the ultimate world paradigm shift” that aims to radically change societies from *jahilliyya* that manifests itself in an Islamic society dominated by a corrupt order to the Islamic society. Through *al hakimiyya*, he aimed to reinstate God’s authority as the sole means for ensuring human happiness and to assert that man can’t forgo God’s guidance in life, otherwise, dignity denigration and cruelty would result. He criticized states’ hegemony over citizens by questioning states’ authority and prerogatives. Human beings are central to Islam as a worldview and a social paradigm that is compatible with anything that brings happiness to humanity. However, the ontological difference between humans and other creatures, on one side, and God, on the other, implies man’s obedience and submission to God. Accordingly, man, starting from rulers, should acknowledge his inability to realize self-fulfillment without God’s guidance because of human mysterious nature, its need to trust in God and to learn that the purpose in life is to act good.

As for Davutoğlu, he introduced the concept of “alternative paradigms” as a normative framework that resists Western domination in international relations, notably US hegemony in the global order. He conceived alternative paradigms as a “shared knowledge” that gave birth to “strategic depth” that should inspire Muslim nations in order to revive their self-perception and alleviate global injustice inflicted on them. Through alternative paradigms, Davutoğlu called for the revival of the Muslim world “Region of Old Civilizations” that is subject to competition among Western powers because of its geostrategic importance and possession of eight strategic straits controlling vital sea passages (Davutoğlu, 1994b). This region that extends from the northern Caucasus to Kuwait and the southern region of Central Asia manifests a homogeneous cultural continuity where borders don’t reflect its communitarian reality. It also has an unfavourable position in the current world order where it is deprived of the capacity to formulate an anti-systemic strategy that challenges the Western world.

Inspired by Ibn Khaldun in his analysis of nations’ consciousness, Davutoğlu underlined the necessity of developing an Islamic paradigm in IR based on the individual self-perception and the formulation of a shared worldview within a community. He formulated “alternative paradigms” starting from a psychological perspective that goes deeper into communitarian bonds to understand individual self-perception as the main element of the community’s self-perception and civilizational revival. Psychology, according to Davutoğlu, is the starting point for building civilizations since it develops the community social order from the ontological paradigm anchored in each civilization (Davutoğlu, 1993). Through his ontology as a human being, the individual
develops a worldview and shares it with others as a common self-perception to be later integrated into the self-perception of a collectively developed civilization. Based on the ontological foundation of civilization in creating a worldview, individuals create a consolidated self-perception that is disseminated over the time within society. The community’s intellectual reproduction emerges through the individual’s psychological ontology and sociological ontology on the historical level. The first ontology answers the questions, Who I am? and What do I represent? By answering these two questions, continuity will be established among nations in the Region of Old Civilizations “kadim medeniyet” and will evolve into a communitarian sense of belonging.

This paradigm would increase communitarian consciousness and positively affect the nation’s internal and external behaviour (Davutoğlu, 1994b). According to Davutoğlu, every nation develops a self-narration to conceptualize its relations with others in conformity with its perception of strategic importance and cultural specificity against a hegemonic domination. By addressing the interaction between religion and culture, Davutoğlu contended that, based on the dominant culture’s idioms, nations produce and perpetuate power relations and adopt a speech favouring the emergence of a hegemonic assabiyat and counter-narrations based on religious nationalism. It is a community renaissance that aims to review people’s identity, thoughts, history and experience. Every nation has priorities, agendas, interests and views expressed by a narrative and a conceptual design that act as a language used to express, represent and reflect the community’s worldview. Facing each nation’s priorities, data are organized, ordered and interpreted differently among nations about international and global issues. In this sense, Western and Islamic classical traditions have differently acknowledged similar issues, such as war, peace, security, order, power, the international system and state role.

Based on this view, Davutoğlu asserted that the permanent transformation of civilizations through openness and adaptation towards a new synthesis of their ontological and sociological foundations makes them persist (Davutoğlu, 1993, 1994a). Accordingly, there is continuity in history that was interrupted by waves of colonization in the 19th century. In this sense, civilizations have a life cycle. First come self-perception formulation and development through interaction with other civilizations, then its expansion until reaching the peak of its intellectual originality and paradigmatic consolidation on the political level. Once intellectual expansion stops and turns into a political paradigm, civilizations start witnessing the beginning of their decline.

Davutoğlu underlined that both the Islamic and Western civilizations started to decline during the Ottoman era and by the end of the 20th century, respectively, because of their intellectual stagnation and ideological saturation as an uncontested political paradigm. From the stage of maturity and stability, Western civilization went into intellectual stagnation and became a politically uncontested paradigm, which signalled both the peak of civilization, notably its superiority, and the beginning of its decline. The same was confirmed about the Muslim civilization. Davutoğlu distinguished between two periods in the modernization of Muslim societies: the premature period of modernization and the civilizational resurrection that took place at the beginning and at the end of the 20th century, respectively (Davutoğlu, 1994b). During the first period, Muslim modernizers aimed to preserve their Islamic identity against colonizers.
However, this position was reconsidered during the second period by the adoption of secularization as the main trajectory of political development. In response to the failure of secularization, the ontological and existential historical facts of the Islamic civilization have strongly emerged.

In light of this analysis, Davutoğlu rejected any hierarchy or classification among civilizations that has no raison d’être since they should engage in a process of exchange based on normative interdependence. He contested Western centrality, as the only predominant world civilization, and considered it an illusion levered to trigger a crisis in the peripheries’ self-perception. Unlike pragmatic postulates put forward by Western intellectuals about the conversion of civilizations to the Western model, Davutoğlu contended that civilizations’ authenticity – thanks to its core – sustains and persists (Davutoğlu, 1993). This core is the self-perception, the foundation of an intellectual prototype, and is based on a worldview: “Weltanschauung.” In this sense, for a civilization to be eliminated, it is necessary to destroy its self-perception and Weltanschauung and replace them with new ones. Civilizations’ power resides in maintaining a link between self-perception and lifestyle, in other words, “Lebenswelt,” which is the meaning of life.

To overcome the Islamic paradigm’s intellectual crisis, Davutoğlu highlighted the need to develop new ethics in a new intellectual framework conceiving classical and fundamental principles. For this purpose, he coined the notion of strategic depth as a practice derived from his theory of “alternative paradigms” in order to enable Turkey to contribute to the formulation of a new paradigm for the Muslim civilization (Davutoğlu, 2001). Strategic depth consists of the investment of Turkey’s Ottoman history and cultural legacy shared with neighbours and the adoption of a multi-dimensional policy that equally interacts with neighbours, Western allies and new partners in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It reconsiders Turkey’s geography and history and stipulates the implementation of five principles in its foreign policy: multidimensionality, zero problems with neighbours, economic interdependence, political dialogue and rhythmic policy.

The adoption of this practice in Turkey’s foreign policy enables Turkey to restore its self-confidence and Islamic self-perception (Dağı, 2005). According to Davutoğlu, Turkey, as a “torn state,” would give the example of a country that overcame the state of crisis by capitalizing on its central position, socio-economic and cultural assets and multi-identity character. It would also revive communitarianism in the Region of Old Civilizations as a direct critique to Westernization and secularization in Muslim states. Through the investment of history and geography and the reconsideration of modernization that was imposed on its society, strategic depth enables Turkey to account for its capabilities, role and position in a changing international conjuncture (Davutoğlu, 2008). In light of its position between different zones of influence, hinterland, the source of its diversified ethnicity and Islamic legacy, it would look forward to becoming a central state by acting as a regional power and global actor.

Through the metamorphosis of strategic depth as a practice in Turkey’s foreign policy, the aim is to highlight the possibility of recreating the Muslim community as part of a transnational dynamic that transcends the Western nation-state model, forges collective consciousness on the identity and socio-cultural levels and bypasses ethnic and national differences. It also strives to
create a historical responsibility among Turkish decision makers with regard to neighbouring regions where Turkey can intervene and act according to strategic depth principles for assistance, conflict resolution and the development of interdependence mechanisms.
Conclusion

As Islam became a global issue in international politics and contemporary world affairs, this chapter highlights two attempts of presenting an Islamic alternative paradigm in IR. It elaborated political thoughts that constituted the main drives of action for various actors and states and that acquired a transnational dimension in response to global injustice. One example is the emergence of violent transnational Islamic actors, such as the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, as a worldwide influential phenomenon that paved the way for the consideration of religious values, notably Islamic ones, in world politics.

Although many studies emphasized the need for a non-Western theory in order to understand world affairs and interpret its dynamics, Islamic thoughts lacked conceptualization and didn’t interact with the existing body of Western theories. They didn’t present complementary frameworks and concepts for a better understanding of international practices that Western theories were unable to depict or interpret.

Sayyid Qutb and Ahmet Davutoğlu were the only thinkers who provided operational concepts inspired by an Islamic normative framework while drawing on the four pillars of constructivism. *Al hakimiyya* and alternative paradigms presented a normative worldview and an operational concept for how Islam perceives world politics and interprets Western domination in world politics through globalization, international institutions, power structure and nation-state. They presented an alternative worldview and a contrasting normative foundation based on an Islamic self-consciousness, collective identity and a common interest in providing a complementary epistemology that constitutes a shared knowledge and provides perpetual practices among individuals and nations. By developing a collective identity and triggering a common interest in the formulation of an Islamic normative framework and operational concepts that constitute a shared knowledge and practice for Muslim nations, both Qutb and Davutoğlu interacted with the existing body of Western theories and borrowed analytical tools from constructivism.
Notes

1 States’ identity refers to their self-perception, conception of their roles, values, norms and references while interests mean the goals and ends they strive to achieve on the international level. When states interact together based on their self-perception and in light of their goals, they develop a shared knowledge, which is an understanding of values, norms and principles that they should abide by in their practices, interactions and foreign policies.

2 *Fitra* is an Arabic word that means “human instinct”/“intuition.”

3 *Sira* is an Arabic word used for the various traditional Muslim biographies of the Prophet Muhammad.

4 *Assabiyya* is the Arabic word coined by that stands for the psychological bond connecting a community together based on a common worldview, values, norms, interests and identity.

5 According to Davutoğlu, civilization is a nation’s cognitive production based on a common identity (self-perception), values and norms that are reflected into practices and actions within the community and with other nations.
References


Beyond terrorism and disorder

Assessing Islamist constructions of world order

Hanna Pfeifer
Introduction

On the occasion of the Munich Security Conference 2016, John McCain (2016) framed the recent events in the Middle East as indicative of the decay of the “Western” world order:

The world order that we built, our dearest inheritance is coming apart. [...] It is [our] vision of world order – our vision – that is under assault today. It is that balance of power that is eroding [...] and nowhere more graphically than the Middle East. [...] It is happening because we have adversaries and enemies that oppose us. It is happening because revisionist powers and terrorist movements like Daesh are testing us, and threatening us, and attacking us, and ultimately seeking to drive us back and displace us.

What this quote bears witness to is a very common and generalized suspicion: the “Western” world order is under attack, and it is, in particular, the events in the Middle East that threaten what McCain calls “our dearest inheritance.” But what does it mean to say that “our” world order is coming apart – what is the world order and who is the “we”? What exactly is it that those enemies oppose “us” in? And in what sense can it be meaningful to argue that certain actors threaten “the” world order?

Since 9/11, the top candidate for the personified threat to the “Western” world order has become the so-called Islamist or Islamist terrorist. This view gained momentum ever since the first euphoria about the “Arabellions” gave way to sobered assessments of the dramatic developments in some of the affected countries. As Tony Blair (2014) warned in 2014,

[...what is presently happening [in the Middle East] still represents the biggest threat to global security of the early 21st Century. [...] At the root of the crisis lies a radicalised and politicised view of Islam, an ideology that distorts and warps Islam’s true message. [...] It is de-stabilising communities and even nations. It is undermining the possibility of peaceful co-existence in an era of globalisation. We might call this [...] perspective an “Islamist” view [...].]

The construction of the “Islamist” as the principal enemy of the “West” is the continuation of a polarization between the “West” and “Islam” on a more general level in an even more coarse way. Within this antagonism, the Muslim “Other” is often depicted as a threat to Western values such as democracy, freedom and secularism (Asad 2009: 21), thereby becoming constitutive of the “Western” self (Hurd 2008: 45). While this phenomenon itself is not new, a new dimension has been added to this mode of production ever since the attacks of 9/11. In the aftermath of this event, many have pointed to different phenomena of the securitization of Islam, which have reinforced the construction of “the Muslim other as a negation of an idealised Western secular self” (Mavelli 2013: 161–163).

This polarization finds both its climax and its distorted generalization in the figure of the “Islamist” who allegedly represents all the qualities opposed to and ambitions directed against the “Western” order, thus becoming the archetype of the Muslim “Other” to the “West”. As an
allegory of violent opposition to the “Western” world order, he serves as a screen for projections of the fear of losing order and values, especially the democratic, modern nation-state, as well as liberalism, secularism and pluralism. The thesis underlying these diagnoses is that “Islamist” and “Western” constructions of and discourses on world order are radically antithetic and essentially irreconcilable.

This chapter wants to question this view and instead pursue the thesis that “Islamist” and “Western” discourses on world order may indeed bear more resemblances and connectivity than is commonly assumed. The main argument to support this thesis is the following: the observation that “Islamist” and “Western” discourses on world order are diametrically opposed is only valid if one assumes that both sides constitute unambiguous and closed structures of meaning. In contrast, I claim that such an essentialization of the “Western” and the “Islamist” construction of world order is undue: both discourses are marked by inner contestation, rivaling claims for what order should look like and changing hegemonies of interpreting analytic and normative claims about the world order. Moreover, the notion of world order itself often remains unspecific and should be understood as a concept that consists of several elements. If those two differentiations, the complex structure of the idea of world order and the plural character of both the “Western” and the “Islamist” discourse are accepted, then a much more nuanced picture of the “Islamist” opposition to the “Western” world order thesis will build: while, indeed, there are moments of rejection and opposition in “Islamist” discourse, there is also a high degree of connectivity to and mobilization of “Western” discursive threads.

This chapter proceeds in four steps. First, it briefly summarizes some of the most important interpretations of “Islamists” in the International Relations (IR) literature and points to what these conceptualizations potentially dismiss with regard to the question of world order. The second part suggests conceptualizing world order as plural discourses on sovereignties (things ordered), legitimacies (ordering principles) and teleologies (normative goals of order) in order to account for its complex structure and avoid generalizations about “the” world order. The third part then develops the concept of sovereignties further and show how within “Western” academic discourse this notion is contested, and thus, no single interpretation of a “Western” understanding of sovereignty is possible. The final part elaborates on how these theoretical considerations and differentiations can methodologically be used to assess connectivity and conflict with “Islamist” discourses on world order. I use the example of Hezbollah in order to illustrate some preliminary insights into empirical results such an approach might generate. In the concluding part, I give an outlook on what use the proposed perspective on the “Islamist” challenge to the “Western” world order can have with regard to the current conflicts in world politics.
“Islamists” in IR: between power maximizers and irrational “Other”

The argument that political Islam should be studied within an interpretive framework that actually engages with the claims made by Islamic thinkers, activists and politicians is not new. As early as in the late 1990s, Roxanne L. Euben warned against the treatment of Islamic fundamentalists within a purely rationalist framework which cannot fully grasp the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism because it “involves the translation of all culture through the filter of Western categories of knowledge,” thus “implicitly bracket[ing] the substance of fundamentalist political thought as irrelevant to properly scientific explanations” (Euben 1999: 23). In rationalist accounts, fundamentalism appears “as a mechanical response to structural pressures” (Euben 1999: 154). To Euben, the construction of fundamentalism within rationalist categories is an attempt to create and discipline a subject that “serves as the irrational Other to our intelligible Self” (Euben 1999: 43) and replaces the communist threat in a post–Cold War era (see also Camilleri 2012: 1029; Mandaville 2013: 184). Fundamentalist movements “stand in relation to Western, secular power and international order as the chaos of the particularistic, irrational, and archaic stand in relation to the universalistic, rational, and modern” (Euben 1999: 7). From a perspective of comparative political theory, she rejects the notion of a strong opposition between fundamentalism and modernity, as well as the characterization of fundamentalism as pre-modern (Euben 1997).

Rather, she argues, fundamentalism is a product of modernity: “fundamentalist world-views are defined in terms of and in opposition to modernity” (Euben 1999: 161, emphasis added). Thus, the question we should ask is, “[what] are Islamic understandings and experiences of modernity, and what, precisely, about modernity is pernicious, from an Islamic fundamentalist point of view in particular?” (Euben 1997: 431). Embracing such an interpretive perspective allows not only for deessentializing the “Islamist Other” but also for discovering commonalities between Islamic and Western thought regarding their critique of post-Enlightenment modernity (Euben 1999: 15) as well as overlaps in the history of thought, for example regarding the role of religion in the public sphere (Abdelkader 2016a).

Yet, Western public discourse and the discipline of IR tend to focus on the violent face of “Islamism” and reproduce the narratives of either the instrumental use of Islam for expressing grievances or the essentially irrational nature of “Islamism” (Abdelkader 2016b). IR still has a strong bias towards questions of security and stability as well as potential obstacles to (liberal) democratization according to the Western model.

One thread of the debate about “Islamism” in IR is shaped by a security studies perspective that focuses on the violent traits of “Islamists” as terrorists. In this strand of research, there are two main options of framing “Islamists”. They are either considered as functionally equivalent to other terrorist movements that deploy violence as a strategic means or as a particularly irrational
actor with a behaviour that remains opaque for the outside observer (Volpi 2010: 149–174). In the first case, “Islamists” are understood as strategic actors that merely instrumentalize religion as a tool of seduction for mobilizing support and constructing legitimizing narratives for underlying social and economic grievances (Rittberger and Hasenclever 2005: 138–139). In the second case, a psychologization of “Islamists” takes place: they are considered somewhat deviant actors whose behaviour cannot rationally be accounted for. Such accounts often draw on a secularist tradition in IR that considers religion as a phenomenon that belongs to the sphere of the irrational (Snyder 2011). They also tend to essentialize Islam and its supposedly inherent violent-proneness, which has sometimes been called the “myth of religious violence” (Cavanaugh 2009: 4).

The second thread of IR deals with the alleged purpose of “Islamism” to take over state power through revolutions (Iran being the case in point) and the question to which extent a state’s “Islamic” quality influences its behaviour in the international sphere or international relations en gros. Two important strands can be identified here, too, and they reiterate the previously mentioned motives. One stands in the tradition of the civilizational approach of Samuel P. Huntington (1993) and follows neo-Orientalist plot: where “Islamists” take over and thus establish a non-secular political system guided by Islam, state behaviour becomes irrational, erratic and conflict-prone. Such accounts rely on an essentialist understanding of Islam “as a single cohesive entity” (Volpi 2010: 32) whose unalterable principles and values are culturally exceptional and can be studied as an independent variable causing certain kinds of (abnormal) behaviour (Volpi 2010: 50–56). The other trend is even more powerful in IR theory: the neo-realist as well as neo-liberal paradigms neglect that religion plays any role at all (Snyder 2011; for exceptions see Bech and Snyder 2011; Fox and Sandal 2010). States are treated as rational actors, either as like units or as utility maximizers, for whom (absolute or relative) power is the only relevant category. Religious arguments, here, are considered as mere rhetoric.

The chasm in the conceptualization of “Islamist” actors either as irrational, violence-prone, exceptional or as rational, instrumentalist, strategist seems to work against recognizing the political quality of “Islamists.” Moreover, there is a strong narrative that constructs “Islamists” as actors who cannot make it to modernity. This assumption has three corollaries. First, it is assumed that “Islamists” cannot embrace the idea of modern statehood. For the discipline of IR, it is important that, according to the secularization narrative, the separation of the political from the religious realm and the privatization of religion were a main precondition for the emergence of the modern state in Europe after the peace of Westphalia (Cho and Katzenstein 2011: 168). In this perspective, the power shift from the church to and the consequent rise of the nation-state, as well as the establishment of the sovereign state system, are constructed as the solution to religiously motivated conflicts in Europe. One effect of this narrative is the creation of “a transhistorical and transcultural concept of religion that is essentially prone to violence [as] one of the foundational legitimating myths of the liberal nation-state” (Cavanaugh 2009: 4). Religion is thus depicted as an anachronism and contradiction to modern statehood. Consequently, “Islamist” actors that allegedly cannot separate between religion and politics are incapable of establishing or being part of a modern sovereign (and therefore necessarily secular) state that is at the basis of the international system (Volpi 2010: 57).
The second corollary is intimately linked to the first one: it claims that “Islamists” are inherently anti-democratic because they cannot separate religion and politics. Liberal democratic theory assumes that any comprehensive doctrine (e.g. religions) should be banned from the public sphere insofar as its reasons and arguments are only valid if a person adheres to its encompassing system of beliefs. Arguments given in the public sphere should be accessible to every citizen, irrespectively of his or her adhesion to a specific encompassing doctrine (Rawls 1993, 1997), and any conception of the political should suffice the imperative of a neutral language or the idea of pure practical reason (Reder 2013: 65–66). Given that “Islamists” are assumed to be incapable of differentiating between the political and the religious realm, these actors are automatically anti-democratic from a liberal perspective. In the broadest sense, the “Islamists’” project is understood as “the establishment of an Islamic state and Islamic institutions” (Roy 2013: 16). Following the liberal conception of democracy, a party that tries to transform religious norms into positive state law undermines systematically the neutrality imperative of the democratic state.

This immediately leads to the third corollary, namely that “Islamists” are anti-pluralistic. Given that comprehensive doctrines as a normative state system must be forced upon a plural society in order to be kept alive. “Islamists” are suspicious of abandoning the pluralist democratic game as soon as they are in power. This has been referred to as the “Islamist dilemma”: “[if] allowed to run for elections, Islamists may win and cancel elections once in power, but preventing them from running undermines democracy” (Teti and Mura 2009: 102). Instead, “Islamist” discourse is assumed to be a monolith that enforces one closed set of norms on societies and, as an institutional realization of one comprehensive doctrine, precludes the possibility of pluralism and contestation. This is often associated with a “sharia’atization of law” (Tibi 2013: 64) and the society’s dispossession of the pluralist struggle over norms.

In this sharp formulation, these three assumptions about “Islamists” are extremely broad generalizations: they are premised both on the existence of a unified, homogenous and consistent “Islamist” discourse that is substantially characterized ex negativo, namely by its anti-secularist character, and the unambiguity of such concepts as modernity and democracy. If one instead assumes an inherent contestedness and the existence of modernities, political rationalities and democratic models in the plural, on one hand, and an understanding of “Islamism” as a pluralist, political and modern discourse, on the other hand, this opens up a perspective on “Islamist” constructions of world order that exceeds mere opposition to and violent threatening of the “West.”

This means two things. First, “Islamist” discourse should be understood as a space where political alternatives, polity and policy options are negotiated and where new ideas of order are developed (Hurd 2008: 118–128). Thus, “Islamist” actors have a political quality: they put forward political claims, create and mobilize legitimizing narratives and develop their own visions of order. Of course, this should not distract from the fact that some of them are also violent actors – but they are more than that. This is the understanding that I would like to pursue here: “Islamists” employ a modern language in which ideas of the political and order are negotiated, and this discourse is not simply irrational and opaque or a mere negation of “Western” discourse. Much rather, interdiscursivity makes ideas travel, they are picked up, reproduced, transformed, rejected
or connected to new ideas.

Second, the inner contestedness of such concepts as sovereignty, democratic legitimacy and normative goals of world order should be made visible in order to de-essentialize the “Western” discourse, too.
A complex notion of world order

Before turning to the “Western” discourse on world order, it should be clarified what is meant by “world order” in this article. In the existing literature on world order, two main trends can be identified. One strand of research deals with empirical transformations of the world order; the second with its normative contestation.

Within the first strand of research, many have argued that changes in international and global governance structures can be empirically observed, which might hint at a transformation that is already underway. An important turning point was the end of the Cold War that entailed a debate as to whether a unipolar world order with the triumph of liberalism would replace the bipolar order (Fukuyama 1989; Ikenberry 2004; Krauthammer 1991) or whether the age of a multipolar order was heralded and what its consequences were going to be, especially with regard to war and peace (Lebow 1994). Today, many observe a rising importance of regions as a complementary or conflicting level of governance to global and national arrangements, a debate that came to be known as “new regionalism” (Acharya 2014). Moreover, the academic debate has questioned its rigid concepts and pointed to the social constructedness and changeability of sovereignty (Bartelson 1995; Biersteker and Weber 1996; Zürn and Deitelhoff 2015) and authority structures (Hall and Biersteker 2002; Hurd 1999; Zürn, Binder and Ecker-Ehrhardt 2012).

With regard to the second trend, it has been stated that normative alternatives to known and established forms of order have emerged. This concerns, on the one hand, power shifts in the international system that strengthen, for instance the BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), and question the hegemony of the “West” (Ba and Hoffmann 2005; Flemes, Nabers and Nolte 2012; Hurrell 2006; Stephen 2014). On the other hand, transnational and in particular religious movements are often depicted as fundamental opposition to the existing global order, which sometimes even goes so far as to question the organization within states per se (Haynes 2001; Shani 2009). More specifically, what is often considered to be at stake is the liberal world order that is either depicted as being threatened by global (mostly Islamist) terrorism (critically Sørensen 2011; Volpi 2010) or the re-rise of authoritarianism (Kagan 2008; Ott-away 2003). The latter approaches hold that a shift in power also entails an adaption of the values that guide and are realized by global institutions (Kagan 2012). Others have attributed the challenges to the liberal world order to its own inner tensions (Jahn 2013; Sørensen 2011) or stressed that there are many versions of what a liberal international order can look like, which means that observable changes and challenges can be framed within – and not without – a liberal paradigm (Ikenberry 2011).

What the normative and the empirical approaches have in common is that they stress the transformation of the world order (marked by Western hegemony): while the former tries to find real-world materializations of such developments, for example in institutional or structural change, the latter try to reflect on the normative implications of such transformations, for
example a change in the values and normative structures underlying the world order. But can we really establish the empirical and normative state of the current world order in a definite way? This seems to be a very difficult enterprise – ambiguities remain, competing interpretations coexist, one becoming hegemonic at one time, the other guiding practices at another time, and a third being institutionalized and codified in international norms. This is my first claim with regard to world order: it can only be understood as an ever-contested discourse that informs practices and institutions in a non-coherent, ambivalent, sometimes contingent way.

If this claim is accepted, then the task to identify contestation of “the” world order is a very vague notion. For instance, what does it mean when McCain claims that its enemies threaten “our” world order? In what way can the world order be threatened as a whole if it is internally contested – and who can even be identified as an enemy? This needs very careful analysis which will not lead to generalizing conclusions, such as: “the ‘Islamists’ threaten the ‘Western’ world order”. What should be studied, in the most differentiated manner possible, are two things: First, how do actors engage with the discourse on world order? The analysis of discursive struggles and the utterances by an actor who tries to gain discursive power are of interest here. If social phenomena “exist only because people collectively believe they exist and act accordingly” (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001: 393); that is they come into being because of inter-subjectively held meanings and interpretations of the world that are expressed through language, then the “struggle over meaning” (Holzscheiter 2014: 144) should be the relevant object of analysis when assessing the contestation of world order. According to my reading of the literature, however, a perspective that can combine the normative and empirical transformation thesis of world order in a way that allows for a nuanced and differentiated assessment of actors’ discursive contestation of the world order is missing up to date.

Second, what are the elements of the world order that can be subject to such contestation? It is important to be specific here instead of claiming the contestation of “the current world order” as a reified, institutionalized whole. I suggest an understanding of world order that answers the following questions: What should be ordered, how should it be ordered and to what purpose? Or, as Hedley Bull put it,

\begin{quote}
[t]o say [that] of a number of things [...] display order is [...] to say that they are related to one another according to some pattern, that their relationship is not purely haphazard but contains some discernible principle. [...] [Order] in social life is [...] a pattern that leads to a particular result, an arrangement of social life such that it promotes certain goals or values.
\end{quote}

(Bull 1995: 3–4, emphasis added)

With regard to the world order, I translate things, principles and goals into sovereignties, legitimacies and teleologies: sovereignties designate the units that are subjected to order and, at the same time, those entities whom final autonomy/agency is ascribed to, for example states, peoples, regions and so on. Legitimacies are the principles according to which a certain order is justified. Teleologies refer to normative visions of what the world order should look like its purpose, as well as historical-philosophical convictions of where it is heading. This concept of world order is not only based on a plausible notion of order but also covers most of the debates
that circulate under the label “world order” in (International) Political Theory and IR. Using the example of sovereignties, the next section will display the wide range of interpretations that exist in Western discourses on world order.

It should be noted that what I refer to as the “Western” discourse on world order is a special sort of discourse, namely an academic one that, obviously, is not the same as the political discourse. However, the two are not entirely disconnected. On the contrary, academic accounts of world order deal with political developments and, conversely, inform political discourses and practices. This means that what I extract from the academic discourse are discursively available interpretations of sovereignty, legitimacy and teleologies. These academic interpretations pick up and feed back into interpretations used by political actors. On a methodological level, the four identified paradigms should be understood as a heuristic scheme that allows for empirically analysing and structuring utterances and discursive contributions by political actors. This is not limited to the analysis of “Islamist” actors that I take as an example here but can be applied to any political actor, including “Western” actors. The goal of the following part is thus to identify the main paradigms of argumentation about sovereignty available in “Western” (academic) discourse that can be used as a heuristic for analysing political discourses on world order or, more specifically, actors’ utterances and verbal contributions to such discourses.
A plural “Western” discourse on sovereignty

With the ongoing processes of globalization and transnationalization, the issue of sovereignty is debated anew and often takes place at the intersection of IR and Political Theory (Kuntz and Volk 2014: 9). In the so-called transnational constellation, state-centred approaches are now challenged by politics outside the state and the domestic sphere such that binaries as inside/outside and local/global are hard to maintain (Kuntz and Volk 2014: 9–12). The constructivist turn allowed for historicizing sovereignty as state sovereignty (Philpott 2001), which opened up the space for identifying different ways of constructing sovereignty (Biersteker and Weber 1996). In this section, four paradigms of sovereignty are identified as dominant in “Western” discourse: absolute, popular, shared and conditioned sovereignty.

Absolute sovereignty

Absolute sovereignty is the archetype of modern sovereignty and the condition for the anarchical international system (Philpott 2001: 19). It is thus also the underlying concept of neo-realist approaches to IR that rarely problematize the notion of sovereignty at all. Paradigmatically, Kenneth Waltz understood the concept of sovereignty as a state’s ability to decide “for itself how it will cope with its internal and external problems” (Waltz 1979: 95–96), thus linking it with the “like unit” argument with regard to the international system: here, the understanding of structural equality of states as sovereigns is at the basis of the idea of the anarchic system where they co-act without functional differentiation given that “in any self-help system, units worry about their survival” (Waltz 1979: 105).

Absolute sovereignty is intimately connected to the idea of the state. It has an internal and an external side: internally, it designates the “supremacy over all other authorities within [a specific] territory and population;” the external side is the “independence of outside authorities” (Bull 1995: 8). The external side is often associated with the (1) formal equality of states, also in the legal sense and the (2) external recognition of authority that grants immunity from external interference, whereas the internal side of sovereignty refers to the (3) final or supreme authority in the domestic arena and the (4) effective control, that is independence or at least controlled interdependence in policies (Biersteker and Weber 1996: 2, Krasner 1999: 9–26, Philpott 2001: 18, Zürn and Deitelhoff 2015: 194–195).

These dimensions could be considered as the ideal of absolute sovereignty. However, almost all authors doubt that such an ideal form in the four dimensions sketched has ever been full-fledged empirical reality: while the Peace of Westphalia established the state as a holder of sovereignty that was absolute in terms of “the scope of affairs over which a sovereign body governs within a
particular territory” (Philpott 2001: 19) and, arguably, the norm of non-intervention, the geographical boundaries were at first quite narrow, merely comprising Europe and potentially such political entities that could fall under label of Christian state (Philpott 2001: 30–33). Moreover, there is an increasing challenge to the absolute conception of sovereignty, in particular through changing state and non-state practice. In practice, the external side of sovereignty is not necessarily dependent on the internal one (Krasner 1999: 14–20): states are for instance recognized as equal part of the state system without effectively holding the ultimate authority within their territory.

And yet, absolute sovereignty not only serves as a “normative and conceptual aspiration in the minds of individuals” (Zürn and Deitelhoff 2015: 195) but also persists in the legal domain in the form of absolute sovereign rights (Donnelly 2014: 233–235). What is important here is that there is a paradigm of absolute sovereignty within which arguments can be made on an academic and more importantly on a normative and political level. In its four dimensions, it is intimately linked to the modern nation-state, which makes absolute sovereignty distinct from popular sovereignty that is discussed in the following section.

**Popular sovereignty**

Essential for this paradigm are the waves of colonial independence and the rise of the idea of self-determination of peoples (Philpott 2001: 35–37; 151–251). While the participation in and recognition within the international system of sovereign states used to be a privilege of European states, with the colonies being mere extensions of them, a new norm emerged in the second half of the 20th century and held that “colonies were entitled to statehood however weak their government, however scant their control over their territory, however inchoate their people” (Philpott 2001: 35).

In contrast to the paradigm of absolute sovereignty, the different dimensions of internal sovereignty, especially the effective authority and control within a territory, were no longer linked to external sovereignty, that is the recognition of the international legal status and sovereign equality understood as the non-existence of formal hierarchy in the international system. Counter-intuitively, however, the rise of colonial independence, while motivated by the idea of self-determination, led to a further strengthening of the international system of *state* sovereignty – equality between states, independent jurisdictions, exclusive authority and so on (Donnelly 2014: 228; Philpott 2001: 35–37). This is because the norm of self-determination merely changed the understanding of who or what was attributed the quality of being a state, not, however, the idea that states were the legitimate polities in the international society or their prerogatives (Philpott 2001: 28). Statehood was the award for those peoples who made their way to freedom.

A central question within the paradigm of popular sovereignty is whom the right to self-determination should be conferred to. Who is the we that asks for popular sovereignty – and who can do so legitimately? This is what has been referred to as the “paradox of popular sovereignty”
it designates the infinite regress into which one enters when, on one hand, arguing that delimiting the people is such an important question that it should be answered by the people while, on the other hand, such a claim already presupposes that the boundaries be drawn around a demos. Historically, the most successful answer to this question was the nation, although there is no causal link between popular sovereignty and the nation (Yack 2001: 517–518). Obviously, not all the quests for statehood are recognized as legitimate even if founded on the idea of a nation. Such groups that try to draw a demos along different lines, for example “those based on solidarities overlapping territorial borders, such as class, ethnicity, and religion” (Jones 2013: 1151) or any kind of transnational affiliation are denied sovereignty. This dominance of the nation has altered the perception of what the units of the global order are: away from states towards peoples or, more precisely, to nations.

It has often been stated that the norm of national self-determination and the wave of events it inspired officially abolished all formal hierarchies in the international system (Lake 2003: 304) and added legitimacy to the recognized polities in international society (Hurrell 2007: 127). Following authors such as John Agnew (2005), however, the idea of a world of equal nation-states is a mere fiction given the obvious power inequalities and the non-availability of effective sovereignty for many states.

**Conditional and gradated sovereignties**

The last two decades have added a different kind of inequality to the sovereignty discourse: conditioned and gradated sovereignties. At the outset of these notions’ development was the shift of attention towards the individual and its rights as the unit that determines how sovereignty is discussed as well as the introduction of a “universal human rights-centred language of global or cosmopolitan law, rather than [...] the state-based territorialized language of international relations” (Chandler 2012: 214). In the aftermath of this debate, the concepts of, first, humanitarian intervention and, later, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) as sketched by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty in 2001 emerged. For this context, the most important change that the R2P brought about was that being sovereign now meant “both to be responsible to one’s own citizens and to the wider international community” (Evans 2006: 708–709). Some academics event went a step further, by introducing the notion of conditioned sovereignty, that is that states that do not fulfil their responsibility could be denied sovereignty (Slaughter 2005: 628). This conditioned or qualified sovereignty is thus premised on the idea that state sovereignty is something that needs to be earned and can, indeed, be lost again. In its more drastic versions, conditional sovereignty “legitimizes intervention to change a political regime” (Hurrell 2007: 280) if the latter has lost its privilege of sovereignty.

The consequences of this kind of thought become even more clear when combined with the so-called democratic peace thesis (DPT) as formulated by Michael Doyle (1983). During the following two decades, the thesis became ever more elaborated (see e.g. Russett and Oneal 2001) and gained significance in political discourse (Eberl 2008: 99–100). Notably, the DPT operated by establishing
a sharp line between a “zone of peace” that, according to Doyle, would spread among democracies (Doyle 1983: 226) and a “zone of war” on its outside where an anarchic and violence-prone state of nature prevailed (Eberl 2008: 120).

Picking up the general intuition behind the democratic peace thesis, theorists of liberal international law began to promote a divided notion of sovereignty, one being the classical idea of state sovereignty coupled with the prohibition of intervention and territorial integrity, the other referring to a version of popular sovereignty that is founded on human rights and democratic governance. They advocated a transformation of international law towards a more normatively enriched understanding, where sovereign equality is only granted to those states that are democratically organized and respect human rights, thus rooted in an individualist approach of freedom. The more radical among those theorists even went so far as to demand that those states that do not have a liberal constitution be excluded from international law and deprived of the right to non-intervention (Eberl 2008: 121–124).

As Christian Reus-Smit (2005) observes, this new brand of liberal internationalism has four key features: first, its advocates take liberal democracies to be empirically more peaceful, protective of political and civil rights and morally reliable, which also makes them the “most advanced historical form of polity” (Reus-Smit 2005: 76). This also justifies that they “ought to have special rights in international society” (Reus-Smit 2005: 76), thereby, fourth, reintroducing a legal hierarchy to the international sphere. As Anna Geis pointed out, these lines of thought have been extended even further in proposals for different forms of liberal club governance within a “League [or] Concert of Democracies” (Geis 2013: 258), thus not only granting liberal democracies special rights but, indeed, also making them an exclusive governance body with the power to take decisions on a global level because of their inner qualities. This means that the idea of conditional sovereignty also entails the introduction of gradated sovereignties.

**Shared sovereignty**

A last paradigm of sovereignty refers to what is called, here, shared or disaggregated sovereignty (see Agnew 2005: 441). It broadly captures those developments that involve a sovereignty transfer to levels above or beneath the state. The first thing that comes to mind are international institutions. Today, “sovereignty no longer consists in the freedom of states to act independently […], but in membership in [sic!] reasonably good standing in the regimes that make up the substance of international life” (Chayes and Chayes 1995: 27). While the oldest international institutions originate in mid-19th-century efforts to coordinate foreign policies, the most far-reaching restrictions imposed on absolute sovereignty on a global scale have certainly been the UN, its ever-evolving system and the development of international law. While these institutions could still be interpreted as being eventually subjected to the states’ consent and thus a mere tool of the exercise of state authority, both the EU and its predecessor institutions and the emergence of some forms of international authority (“delegated” and “pooled” authority, Zürn and Deitelhoff 2015: 2015) casted actual doubt on the persistence of absolute sovereignty.
The EU is the most pertinent example of sovereignty transfer. Indeed, the supranational bodies can take decisions in those policy fields that are communitarized within the EU without the nation-states’ consent (Philpott 2001: 39–40). The “sovereignty-eroding potential of [...] [this type of] integrative regionalism” (Acharya 2002: 23) through functional spill-over effects (Haas 1961) was best explained by neo-functionalist approaches. In the 1970s, it still seemed that Europe and its integration in the EU stood in sharp contrast to the disintegration and advancing of the nation-state in the other regions of the world (Haas 1961: 366).

But then, the 1990s bore witness of the emergence of what came to be known as “new regionalism.” As opposed to the “old regionalism” that mainly focused on strategic and economic cooperation, new regionalism was marked by its “comprehensiveness and multidimensional nature” (Acharya 2014: 86). It was no longer dependent on a dominant hegemon but, rather, developed autonomously from within and below. A common trend is that in contrast to integrative regionalism, this new intrusive regionalism “is not always based on consent [...] [and instead often marked] by a coercive element” (Acharya 2002: 28) either in a political or in a military sense. While in some countries, the reluctance to restrict state sovereignty and create supranational bodies at first prevailed, given that these nation-states have only gained their full sovereignty quite recently, most regions now know models of shared sovereignty, too. Today, regional institutions can be considered building blocks of a multilevel global governance architecture with shared sovereignties.

One should not forget that the sub-national level plays its role in shared sovereignty, too. The concept of federalism, for instance, is the prototype of “shared and negotiated sovereignty” (Rudolph and Hoeber Rudolph 2010: 556). It is an ambivalent part in state formation it is opposed to the ideal of absolute state sovereignty. Examples include not only the US and Germany but also the UK and India (Rudolph and Hoeber Rudolph 2010). More recently, cases such as Iraqi Kurdistan puzzle the conceptions hitherto discussed with regard to federalism (Mansour 2014). The model of autonomous regions that are neither sovereign states nor simple administrative units within a nation-state is also relevant with regard to other world regions, for instance the Basques in Spain and France, Kosovo and Kashmir.
Empirical impressions from Hezbollah’s discourse on sovereignty

As the previous section has shown, there are four different paradigms or argumentative schemes available in the “Western” discourse on sovereignty: (1) absolute, (2) popular, (3) conditional and (4) shared sovereignty. This section shows methodologically how this heuristic can be used for analysing political actors’ discursive contributions to this thread of the discourse on world order by drawing on the example of Lebanese Hezbollah. The overriding goal of using this heuristic is to make visible discursive connectivity and conflict between the “Western” and, in this case, one “Islamist” actor’s discourse on sovereignty.

Technically speaking, the four identified paradigms of argumentation serve as deductive subcategories in a category scheme of world order. This scheme can be used for structuring inductive codes that are gained from a qualitative analysis of texts. Table 6.1 displays the sovereignty-related extract of this larger category frame.

Table 6.1 Display of category “sovereignty” and its subcategories, including short descriptions and epistemological status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element/Paradigm: Sovereignties</th>
<th>Short Description: What the Order Consists of</th>
<th>Epistemological Status Logical Element/ Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X1 Absolute Sovereignty</td>
<td>Sovereign: States</td>
<td>“Western” Discourse/ Deductive Sub-category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X2 Popular Sovereignty</td>
<td>Sovereign: Peoples</td>
<td>“Western” Discourse/ Deductive Sub-category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X3 Conditional Sovereignty</td>
<td>Sovereign: (Peoples →) legitimate states</td>
<td>“Western” Discourse/ Deductive Sub-category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X4 Shared Sovereignty</td>
<td>Sovereign: (Identities →) states, ROs, IOs, sub-state actors</td>
<td>“Western” Discourse/ Deductive Sub-category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X4+n _____ Sovereignty</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Other&quot; Discourse/ Inductive Sub-category</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: RO = Regional Organization; IO = International Organization.

Obviously, there is no guarantee that the discursive contributions by actors such as Hezbollah fit this deductive category – on the contrary, as shown above, the general assumption is rather that “Islamists” constructions of world order stand in sharp opposition to “Western” conceptions. This is why the suggested heuristic should be open for inductive additions, the space for which is represented by the last row in Table 6.1. If certain arguments reappear in the utterances of
Hezbollah representatives and seem both quantitatively important and qualitatively coherent, a new inductive sub-category can be created. This then represents an additional paradigm that should be elaborated on in the way that it has been done for the “Western” paradigms earlier: what is the inner logic of this paradigm, what arguments support it, what variations on the themes exist and so on.

In what follows, I illustrate the extent to which Hezbollah’s discursive constructions of sovereignty can be connected to the “Western” paradigms of sovereignty – where can we find argumentative convergence, that is discursive reproduction; what are the fields of discursive struggle where a reinterpretation, rejection or re-association with new concepts take place? In this article, I will concentrate on a single example drawn from a comprehensive account of Hezbollah’s ideology that can be found in the book *Hizbullah. The Story from Within* by Naim Qassem (2010), Hezbollah’s deputy secretary-general: the concept of *wilayat al-faqih* and how it is related to conceptions of sovereignty. The aim is to demonstrate the applicability of the suggested category scheme for empirical studies of how political actors discursively relate to the “Western” and develop their own constructions of world order and to what extent these processes are conflictual.

Hezbollah officially considers its commitment to the jurisprudence of *al-wali al-faqih*, the jurist-theologian, as one pillar of its programme (Qassem 2010: 112–122). In the absence of the last infallible Imam, Imam al-Mahdi, his task is to reveal “Sharia’s verdicts and judgments, becoming the spiritual authority of last resort” (Qassem 2010: 113). He has a high degree of authority, a variety of tasks and is considered the leader of the Islamic *ummah*. Given that *al-wali al-faqih* currently is Ali Khamenei and thus the supreme leader of Iran, an obvious question is to what extent this concept is compatible with the notion of absolute sovereignty.

Indeed, claiming that Hezbollah does not have a Lebanese but, rather, a trans-national identity has been part of a political discourse which tries to portray Lebanese Shiites as not being part of the Lebanese nation. As Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr (2008) has demonstrated, however, these claims have to be handled with care. She makes the case that the transnational dimension is part of the Shiite production of a national identity and thus a competing vision of what it means to be Lebanese (Shaery-Eisenlohr 2008: 210). Conversely, portraying Hezbollah as a non-Lebanese actor as both Sunni and Maronite Lebanese actors do should always be reflected with regard to its political motivation, against the backdrop of an instrumentalization of sectarian argumentation and in the historical context of a decades-lasting political and social marginalization of the Shiite community in Lebanon. The most important allegation against Hezbollah is that it acts as a mere puppet of Iranian interests in Lebanon and thus has an essentially anti-national attitude (Shaery-Eisenlohr 2008: 204; 208).

In Qassem’s interpretation, the relationship between Hezbollah and Iran has to be separated from the question of the commitment to *wilayat al-faqih*. The relationship with Iran is understood as part of a “common practice where countries of the world work towards forging alliances and building strength through collaboration all while maintaining their own convictions and serving their own interests” (Qassem 2010: 392). The main common interest and basis of loyalty with Iran as with Syria resides in the common commitment to *muqawama* against US
hegemony and Israeli occupation.

This means that *wilayat al-faqih* concerns a sphere that is somewhat different from national politics; it is a transnationally effectual framework for politics:

Such commitment to the Jurist-Theologian and his jurisprudence does not limit the scope of internal work at the level of forging relations with the various powers and constituents of Lebanon. It further does not limit the sphere of regional and international cooperation with groups with whom the Party’s strategic direction or concerns meet.

(Qassem 2010: 121)

Hezbollah emphasizes that it is a Lebanese party that is concerned with Lebanese issues.

Given that working within a particular country is connected to a given set of circumstances and individuality, it is so that Hezbollah’s work concords the Islamic order with the Lebanese national background. It is a Lebanese faction by all means, from its framework to its members. […] Concern for the Islamic world’s issues and those of the oppressed does not conflict with interest and concern for national issues that fall within the realm of refuting occupation and oppression, struggling for justice and preserving interests and national priorities.

(Qassem 2010: 121–122)

To subordinate oneself to the jurisprudence of the Jurist-Theologian is considered to be a normal practice of committing oneself to certain values and institutions that may or may not be transnational:

There is no party or group in the world that does not have its internal and external delimitations, based on its vision of its own interests, and in harmony with the convictions it holds. Such points are not considered negative except where they are a source of subordination which hampers free choice, of a clear conspiracy with the enemy, or of an action which results in domination and annulment of others’ rights.

(Qassem 2010: 122)

In this sense, the belief in *wilayat al-faqih* does not imply anything for the relations between Hezbollah and Iran – it is not understood as being linked to national politics. Iran just happens to also commit to this jurisprudence and to have embraced an Islamic state in which *al-wali al-faqih* is part of the constitution. This is why the absolute sovereignty of the nation-state, in this regard, is not questioned at all – on the contrary:

The Party is not connected to events taking place inside Iran, for these are considered to be internal concerns linked to the choices and convictions of the Iranian people and their representatives. […] The Party’s scope of work and interest requires appropriate groundwork, not indulgence or interference with the affairs of others. […] The relationship between Hizbullah and Iran […] is a genuine collaboration on common convictions and in the requirements of the relationship, a candid, transparent and declared relation that has realized great practical benefits for Lebanon.

(Qassem 2010: 391)

Thus, the notion of absolute sovereignty is re-emphasized as irrevocable while at the same time it is connected to the concept of *wilayat al-faqih*. This connection, is interpreted as belonging to
those kinds of transnational commitments to ideas and norms that are normal for any political actor. It could thus be interpreted as part of an argument that considers absolute sovereignty to give way to shared sovereignty.

As Shaery-Eisenlohr has argued, while Hezbollah and Iran’s ruling elite do share a common understanding of piety as instituted in the belief in the guardianship of al-wali al-faqih, this does not imply that there is no struggle over meaning and competing interpretations of Islam: “the boundary between Islam and non-Islam is constantly negotiated and is a source of disagreement and debate” (Shaery-Eisenlohr 2008: 207). This negotiation is not a one-way street in which Iranian elites dictate the correct interpretation. Rather, the

fatwas, although pronounced by a single authority, Khamenei in this case, are much more a product of dialogue than anyone involved would like to admit. While Hizbullah derives meaning from vilayat-i faqih, it also takes part in the shaping of rulings by the vali.

(Shaery-Eisenlohr 2008: 208–209)

Still, the Iranian revolution and the subsequent political system is presented as a model of modern, Islam-inspired governance. The commitment to wilayat al-faqih is not only seen as harmless to Lebanon’s sovereignty. It is also interpreted as the precondition for popular sovereignty. Given the successful revolution in Iran that, in Qassem’s interpretation, led to the self-determination of the Iranian people, one should take this as a role model for Islamic governance:

Iran represents a vivid manifestation of Islam’s applicability, one that every Muslim adherent should observe and contemplate. It altered the widespread, gloomy picture of Islam that was the result of ignorant errors and enemy conspiracy. It provided a case in point for popular elections, street opposition and steadfastness [...]. It provided the example for instituting a system of free choice of representatives [...]. Iran’s experience is also manifested success through its attentions to freedoms, for opinion divergence, women’s rights and the management of state institutions.

(Qassem 2010: 389)

In the category frame as sketched in the previous chapter, however, wilayat al-faqih would appear as a distinct inductive category because it constitutes an extension of and novelty to the “Western” discourse. It could perhaps be interpreted as a sort of divine sovereignty insofar as the task that al-wali al-faqih has to realize through his guardianship is

the preservation and implementation of Islam. [...] There is a need for one clear path that practically brings the [Islamic] nation together. [...] [His] authority thus represents a continuation of that of the Prophet and the infallible Imams (PBUH) insofar as his role is concerned. [...] [He is the] one who carries out the Imam’s doctrinal and jurisprudence functions as required.

(Qassem 2010: 115–116)

He is granted authority in many fields, among which is the implementation of Islamic jurisprudence. Notably, he “may decide on issues of war and peace” (Qassem 2010: 117). This ascription makes it very clear that wilayat al-faqih represents a concept outside the known,
“Western” ideas on sovereignty where the decision on war and peace is a matter of the state, of collective security mechanisms on a global level or, in the case of conditional sovereignty, of a club of liberal democracies.
Conclusion: an ambivalent picture of the “Islamist” threat to the “Western” world order

While this rough interpretation of Naim Qassem’s explanations on Hezbollah’s view of wilayat al-faqih cannot replace an encompassing and in-depth empirical analysis, it may nonetheless indicate the type of result we can expect from such an analysis. In order to scrutinize “Islamist” constructions of world order in relation to the “West”, scholars need to overcome seemingly clear binaries and the assumption that ideas can be attributed to some actors – and not others – in an unambiguous way. Hezbollah does not simply reject ideas of sovereignty established in “Western” thought, political discourse and practice. Rather, it actively problematizes the relationship between its programme and different notions of sovereignty; it reaffirms the importance of absolute and popular sovereignty but, at the same time, innovates and creates new interpretations of these concepts by linking them to the idea of wilayat al-faqih. From this first insight into the thought of Hezbollah, one can expect that this ambivalent picture is rather representative of its perception and construction of the world order: it rejects and criticizes some parts but picks up others and alters their meaning.

Such a multifaceted picture of the relationship between “Western” and “Islamist” discourses on world order can only emerge if both the notion of world order is specified as consisting of different elements and the “West’s” interpretations of world order are uncovered in their inner plurality and contestedness.

The question remains: What can we learn from such results in the field of IR? In my reading, there are three potential fields for which this approach and its results could be of interest. The first is the theoretical debate on the question of religious actors in IR. As shown previously, they are often considered as either irrelevant or irrational and thus a threat to international security. These assessments are often based on a strong binary between the secular and the religious that has been questioned in recent debates (Casanova 2012; Hurd 2008, 2012; Taylor 2007). Showing that “Islamist” discourses on world order are neither opaque nor irrational but, on the contrary, partly move in the same fields of argumentation as “Western” discourses would confirm that any strong separation of the religious and the secular is untenable. Rather, “Islamist” actors participate in constructing and shifting the boundaries between the secular and the religious. They also develop their own notions of order by engaging with, transforming, adopting and challenging the concepts available in the liberal discourse on world order. Focusing on such interpretations of order by “Islamist” actors is important not least because they actively shape the building of orders, an example of which is the role of Tunisian Ennahda party in the process of building a democratic order in post-revolutionary Tunisia.

If it is true that some of the alleged differences between “Western” and “Islamist” discourses on world order disappear when subjected to a detailed analysis, then this, second, raises questions
with regard to the construction of strong differences between them in political discourse. Some have suggested that calling an actor religious is a political move that aims at banning it from the sphere of the political and de-legitimizing some of its acts (Asad 1993; Cavanaugh 2009). At the same time, it legitimizes state practices against such religious entities. These questions of legitimation and delegitimation concern in particular the sensitive area of the use of force and resort to violence. Such a perspective does not deny the problem of or speak in favour of the legitimacy of “Islamist” violent practices – on the contrary, it bears a potential of criticizing “Western” practices like military interventions that are often carried out under the pretext of fighting the “Islamist” threat. If one can uncover some parts of the “Western”–”Islamist” antagonism as resulting from a politics of difference rather than “actual” differences, then this might not only contribute to reducing the violent-proneness and fierceness of this antagonism. It might also point to the necessity of finding new interpretations for ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, especially with regard to the “Western” role.

Finally, such results open up a new interpretive scheme for “Islamist” practice. While the claim here is not that discursively created meaning translates into a consistent practice, I still hold, conversely, that every practice needs an interpretation in order to become meaningful. It is very common to interpret “Islamist” behaviour via ascriptions from the outside, for example by imputing social grievances or psychological deviance to them. It is rare that “Islamists” are taken seriously in what they offer as interpretations of their actions and behaviour, at least in “Western” IR. Given that hitherto explanations neither seem intellectually satisfying nor inform policies that would curtail violent conflicts in and with the Middle East, it is high time to investigate alternative interpretations. This chapter is meant as a contribution to such a debate.
Notes

1 This is why “Western” and “Islamist” are consequently put in quotation marks in this chapter.

2 She is also sceptical about assigning the label post-modern to fundamentalism given that “the Islamist insistence on absolute foundations is antithetical to the antifoundationalism characteristic of postmodernism” (Euben 1999: 436).

3 Constructivist approaches are far more promising in conceptualizing religion as a factor in international relations. Given that this chapter takes a constructivist position itself, these positions are left aside. Seminal contributions in this field include Kubálková (2000), Laustsen and Wæver (2000), Philpott (2002) and Thomas (2005).

4 For purposes of giving an overview of the paradigms of legitimacy and teleologies, I name the four strands of discourse that I have identified, respectively: legitimacy: (1) individual-based, (2) community-based, (3) deliberative and (4) agonistic legitimacy; teleologies: (1) liberal convergence, (2) Western hegemony, (3) pluriverse and (4) clash of civilizations.

5 A very convincing example for the first is the R2P debate in IR that is intimately connected to the political developments and discussions of the concept. An example for how IR debates can influence political practices in the democratic peace thesis that politicians explicitly referred to for justifying their policies.

6 For instance, it is quite probable that the US and the German government have quite different interpretations of sovereignty. This could be brought to light by applying the suggested heuristic.

7 The full scheme can be made available by the author of this chapter.

8 Qassem describes the concept of the Jurist-Theologian as part of “a constitution based on commitment to clerical custodianship” (Qassem 2010: 119) that was for the first time practically implemented after the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 when Imam Khomeini, “the embodiment of this jurisdiction in our times” (Qassem 2010: 388) became the custodian of Islamic shari’a. Who becomes the Jurist-Theologian is a question of qualification and wisdom.

9 It is noteworthy that the clear majority of US-led military interventions from 2001 to today were carried out in Muslim-majority countries.
References


7
Struggling for post-secular hegemony

Causal explanations for religious discrimination in the Islamic Republic of Iran

Farhood Badri
Introduction

The Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the most successful states in which religion institutionally captured the whole body politic and discursively became the predominant source of state identity. Since 1979, this post-secular state identity has undergone several changes, oscillating between radicalization and de-radicalization, conservative and moderate interpretations of Islam. These shifts in framing the state identity constitute the fundamental post-secular struggles for discursive hegemony and institutional power in Iran. They became manifest in Iran’s foreign policy as well as domestic reform debates. In contrast to prominent political issues, the chapter asks how these post-secular struggles affect the most vulnerable within Iranian society, non-Muslim religious minorities.

While recognized religious minorities can practise their religion more or less freely, not recognized religious minorities face open discrimination and persecution. Discriminating and persecuting religious minorities in Iran has a long tradition predating the Islamic Revolution in 1978/79 (Sanasarian 2000: 14–16). Nevertheless, since the establishment of the revolutionary and highly complex Islamic state system, this continued practice is much more visible, build on a constructed Islamic collective identity. Constitutorially, the provisions of the Islamic Republic are full of references to Islam and imperatives of being in accord with Islam. Religious freedom is highly regulated, the recognition of religious minorities selective,¹ and the description of particular characteristics for non-discrimination is missing the term religion. This trend is reflected in both civil and penal law as well. Moreover, besides the de jure limitations, there are plenty of de facto violations ranging from discrimination and harassment to repression and persecution. However, recognized religious minorities can practice their religion more or less without state interferences, though facing limitations in some areas, such as public employment, anyways. In contrast, not recognized religious minorities openly face discrimination and harassment, are under security surveillance or even, like the Baha’i, forbidden by law. Despite this obvious inequality in the treatment of non-Muslim religious minorities, the varying degree to which their right to religious freedom is denied cannot be explained solely from a rational-choice perspective. In fact, quantitative research (Sarkissian et al. 2011) provides evidence for both rational-choice based and identity-related explanations for religious discrimination.

Apart from some sophisticated works from a rational choice (Gill 2008) or normative political theory perspective (Bielefeldt 2013; Nussbaum 2008), most of the research on religious freedom and religious minorities only provides correlations and no causation (Marshall 2008b; Fox 2008; Grim and Finke 2007). While some authors (Sarkissian et al. 2011) seek to assess the causes for religious discrimination, their findings point to a constructivist gap in research on religious freedom and religious minorities and the need for a more in-depth and context-specific analysis of causal factors for norm violations. Thus, the question why religious minorities are being oppressed and persecuted (differently) by certain states or governments is still awaiting answers.
and, in particular, the specific causal paths underlying norm violations need to be uncovered.

This chapter intends to contribute to filling this gap with insights from International Relations (IR) norm research and the (sociological) debate on multiple secularities and post-secular (inter)national politics. A qualitative within-case analysis illustrates how the post-secular struggles for discursive hegemony on the Islamic state identity of Iran help to explain the different degrees to which non-Muslim religious minorities are persecuted.
Research on religious freedom and religious minorities

Although most studies on religious freedom and religious minorities only provide correlations and no causation, their results give important insights to possible causal factors impeding compliance with the norm. The most prominent factor accounting for the variances in norm compliance is the separation of state and church or religion respectively. Allegedly, a secular setting, in contrast to religiously identified states like Iran, is commonly seen as the guarantee for religious freedom. But the concept of secularity is extremely varying, from a religious neutrality of the constitutional state up to an anti-liberal or radical state ideology ruling out any form of religiosity in the public sphere (Bielefeldt 2003: Chapter 2–3). “Indeed, extreme religious and extremely secular states together make up the most of the world’s restrictive polities” (Marshall 2008a: 16).

Consequently, it is not important if there is an institutional separation but how the state–religion relation is designed – institutionally or through other bonds – and how, as a result of this design, religion is politically and socially regulated, whereby a high level of regulation results in a high degree of norm violations (Fox 2008; Grim and Finke 2007). This rational-choice-based argument posits that the root cause of religious regulation is competition for influence and political power which drives religious groups to pursue close relationships with political rulers to guarantee their dominant position in society (Sarkissian et al. 2011: 430–431; Gill 2008). If religious institutions or elites have a symbiotic relationship with the government or the state (Fox 2008: 354–355), then these actors support each other in a variety of ways: religious elites provide additional sources of legitimacy to the state; in return, the government supports these religious actors through, for example privileged access to public institutions (like higher education), or even by some form of restriction or repression on other religions (Gill 2008). In extreme cases of this symbiotic relationship even citizenship is connected to religion: “In Saudi Arabia all citizens must be Muslims and in Iran, Kuwait, and the UAE [United Arab Emirates] citizenship is strongly linked to Islam. In Israel, any Jew born anywhere can claim citizenship” (Fox 2008: 355).

Here, another factor accounting for the cross-national variances in norm compliance is significant: the nexus of religious and national identity. This is where the constructivist gap becomes evident. Although not an exclusive characteristic, this nexus occurs mostly in predominantly Muslim states (Fox 2008: 354). Moreover, an explicitly non-religious, radical atheist form of national identity is possible: the originally Buddhist states China and North Korea perceive themselves as materialistic atheists based on their communist state ideology. For Marshall (2008b: 4), this accounts most for the repression religious minorities face. In general, those states violating religious freedom most intensively share the common feature of a radical state ideology which rests on either religious, secular or nationalistic collective identity (Marshall 2008b: 1). For some rulers of predominantly Muslim states like Iran, Islam serves as a vehicle for national identity as well as a demarcation line against the West and its liberal values. State or
government legitimacy is vitally based on this Islamic identity. Consequently, a threat to this identity fundamentally threatens the state’s legitimacy. Religious freedom, the right to change one’s religion and the connected issue of proselytism, in particular, pose an existential threat to the cultural and religious identity of the Islamic political community. They pose a threat because they challenge the established, hegemonic interpretations of norms or visions of the Islamic state with viable alternatives. In fact, the issue is far more complex. In Iran law is bound to religious “affiliation” or “denomination,” and therefore, a change in religion consequently entails a change in status within the legal system. For Muslims, converting to a different religious belief or renouncing religion at all equals apostasy – a sin punishable by death in states like Iran. Note, however, that Muslims can change within denomination (madhhab), moving from Shi’a Islam to Sunni Islam and vice versa, despite the fact that Sunni Islam is to a certain extent perceived as “less perfect” and that the change in denomination has some legal and political consequences, such as the fact that you are no longer eligible for the presidency of the country, for example. For others than Muslims, it is, of course, possible to convert to Islam or to convert from Judaism to Christianity.

In fact, the findings of the latest quantitative studies confirm identity as an explanation for norm violations (Sarkissian et al. 2011). While the previously mentioned studies only deliver global scores for individual countries, not differentiating between religious minorities within each country, they focus on religious minorities as the unit of analysis. By extending the Religion and State (RAS) data set developed by Fox (2008), the authors present a new module, the Religion and State-Minorities (RASM) data set, which allows for a separate score for each religious minority in each country (Sarkissian et al. 2011: 426). The data set focuses on the aspect of government policy towards religious minorities and defines religious discrimination “as state restrictions on the religious practices or institutions of religious minorities that are not placed on the majority religion” (Sarkissian et al. 2011: 424). Thus, it is possible to identify variance and explore patterns in the treatment of religious minorities (Sarkissian et al. 2011: 431), giving plausible and more reliable insights into causal factors impeding compliance with the norm. Focusing on religious minorities in Muslim-majority countries the authors compared several explanatory factors derived from ideational as well as rational choice-based theories. Among those, the ideational factor of Islamic doctrines and the variation in tolerance according to the religious identity of the minority group, along with the rational choice-based factor of competing for influence and political power – and the thereof assessed close relations between religious authorities and the state – bear the most explanatory potential for norm violations (Sarkissian et al. 2011: 438). On one hand, the authors’ findings confirm that the identity of the religious group matters with regard to the discrimination they face: compared to orthodox Muslim minorities (Sunni or Shi’a), “people of the book” (Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians), other minorities (Hindus, Buddhists) and “apostates” or heretical Muslims (Ahmadis, Baha’is, Druze) are subjected to significantly higher levels of discrimination – in this order (Sarkissian et al. 2011: 440). On the other hand, this finding may also be related to – or even a result of – the close relations between the religious authorities of the majority religion and the state, which is a rational choice-based argument (Sarkissian et al. 2011: 440). Nevertheless, these findings point to the need for a more in-depth and context-specific
analysis of causal mechanisms that transmit the detected causal factors for (varying) norm violations.

To conclude, findings from quantitative studies reveal that two interconnected factors stand out especially when explaining the overall poor compliance record of religious freedom: (1) the (institutional) design of state–religion relations and, as a result of this design, how religion is politically and socially regulated and (2) the nexus of religious and national identity and, consequently, the particular identity of religious minorities. These interconnected factors and the constructivist gap sensitize one to the specific context in which – and by whom – religious freedom is interpreted, revealing its divergent cultural validation.
International relations norm research

When it comes to cross-national variance in compliance with religious freedom, IR research on international norms adds valuable insights. Conventional IR norm literature posits that international norms passing through a process of norm diffusion will – under certain conditions – be complied with ending in rule-consistent behaviour of states. Reasons hindering state compliance with international norms are put into two categories: whereas rational compliance approaches point to a lack of either capacity or will of states (Haas 2000), conventional constructivists point to factors of political culture wrapped up in the resonance thesis (Checkel 1999; Cortell and Davis 2000). Indeed, the resonance thesis posits that domestic political structures in terms of state–society relations condition the access to international norms promoted by transnational actors into the national arena. Moreover, the impact of international norms depends on their cultural match in terms of congruence with the domestic political culture, or put differently, “international norms are more likely to be implemented and complied with in the domestic context, if they resonate or fit with existing collective understandings embedded in domestic institutions and political cultures” (Risse and Ropp 1999: 271). In fact, a “misfit” or “mismatch” in domestic resonance potentially explains the variations in compliance with the global norm of religious freedom since it parallels the two interconnected factors for norm violations combining rational-choice-based with ideational explanatory factors.

But what seems plausible at first sight – that is that the variance in domestic political culture helps to explain the cross-national variance in complying with religious freedom – needs to be put into context from a critical constructivist norm research perspective. The problem with the resonance thesis is that, although it rightly acknowledges specific domestic socio-political and socio-cultural contextual settings, it also entails a unidirectional, linear character and normative bias. Thus, it falls under the same line of critique that conventional constructivists face in general.

Until recently, conventional constructivist mainly focused on the emergence, diffusion and power of international norms. In rather linear conceptualizations of norm life cycles (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998) or in spiral models (Risse et al. 1999), norm compliance as an unquestioned internalized rule-consistent behaviour of states was predicted as the final outcome of these inter-/transnational norm diffusion or socialization processes.

Against this conceptualization of rather stable and legitimate norms and linear norm diffusion processes, critical constructivists raised legitimate doubts in several analytical, as well as normative, aspects (Engelkamp et al. 2012; Wiener 2007b). In analytical respect, conventional constructivists tend to neglect, among others, the ideational structure aspect and bottom-up quality of norm emergence (Engelkamp et al. 2012: 104–105; Acharya 2011) and that there is more between the dichotomous binary of full adaption or mere rejection of international norms. A fact that made critical constructivists introduce the concept of norm contestation to show that norms can have different, changing meanings and interpretations. Beyond analytical shortcomings, an
implicit normative bias of “good” global or liberal norms in contrast to “bad” local beliefs and practices reveals a severe manifestation of marginalizing and de-legitimizing non-Western value systems and bodies of knowledge, on one hand, and neglecting the historical contingency and the dark sides of allegedly “good” and “widely accepted” liberal norms, on the other (Engelkamp et al. 2012: 104–105, 107–108).

While conventional constructivists conceive norms as rather stable social structures or reference frames influencing state behaviour, critical constructivists conceive norms as significantly more dynamic and flexible (Wiener 2009: 179–180). Critical constructivists such as Wiener begin with the premise that “norms – and their meanings – evolve through interaction in context” (Wiener 2007a: 6). As social constructs, norms are flexible and dependent on the socio-cultural context actors are socialized in. Thus, the very meaning of a norm highly depends on the interactions between the context-specific cultures they are about to be implemented in and the therein socialized individuals. Therefore, norms are contested by default (Wiener 2007a: 6). In this sense, norms are flexible by definition. Nevertheless, they may acquire stability over particular periods, structuring behaviour. This is what Wiener calls the “dual quality” of norms (Wiener 2007b). While norms do have formal validity (the legal framework, such as a constitution or a treaty), the meaning of norms does not necessarily follow from treaty language or organizational practices. Instead the meaning of norms is interpreted according to cultural practices or cultural validation, revealing the so-called meaning-in-use, that is the individual everyday experience or what is customary (Wiener 2007a: 5). Norm contestation thus reflects a specific re- or enacting of normative structures as entailing the meaning-in-use (Wiener 2009: 176).

From an IR perspective the interesting point is that if norms “travel” from one context to another – for example from the nation-state to the transnational arena or vice versa – their meaning becomes contested as organizational and cultural social practices subsequently decouple: “It is through this transfer between contexts, that the meaning of norms becomes contested as differently socialized actors, for example, politicians, civil servants, parliamentarians, or lawyers trained in different legal traditions seek to interpret them” (Wiener 2007a: 12).

Seen from a critical constructivist norm research perspective, the resonance thesis rather serves as a proxy for norm contestation. Cross-national variance in norm compliance, in this understanding, is quasi-happening by default because the meaning of a norm is likely to differ in different socio-cultural domestic contexts. It is exactly this context-specific interrelatedness which conventional constructivists neglect in their unidirectional diffusion models. Here, norm localization comes at play and reveals how processes of norm contestation can range from reinterpretation of global norms to adjusting to or fitting with regional or domestic contexts up to the creation of new regional norms to preserve regional autonomy from dominance and neglect of the outside world (Acharya 2004, 2011).
Research on multiple modernities, multiple secularities and the post-secular

Research on multiple modernities, multiple secularities and post-secular (inter)national politics deal with specific contexts more accurately. This is similar to the critical constructivist’s claim that divergent socio-cultural contexts matter for the meaning of and compliance with norms.

For instance, research on multiple modernities questions the homogenizing and hegemonic assumptions of a specific Western programme of modernity (Eisenstadt 2000: 1–2). In contrast, they unveil the respective context-specific factors like cultural traditions and historical experiences which influenced modern societies or influence processes of modernization (Eisenstadt 2000: 23). These multiple modernities did not evolve conflict-free. Instead, they are the very product of highly contested political struggles over re-interpretating, redefining, and re-appropriating the discourse of modernity in their own context-specific terms (Eisenstadt 2000: 24). In this sense, multiple modernities depict processes of norm contestation or norm localization.

In the same line of argument, IR, political science and, especially, sociological research turned from “secularism to secularisms” (Ghobadzadeh 2015: 17). Analogous to multiple modernities, they speak of multiple secularities pointing to the multiple normative meanings of secularism (and the huge varieties of state– religion relations). In light of the global resurgence of religion, sociologists (of religion) first questioned the secularization thesis. Whether they named it “desecularization” (Berger 1999) or “deprivatization of religion” (Casanova 1994), what they meant was the strikingly visible rise of religious movements, actors and institutions with an explicit (political) ambition to enter the public sphere – the allegedly pure secular domain. These findings prove the secularization theory wrong at least with respect to religious decline and the privatization of religion. The varying characteristics and divergent developments of public religions also imply that processes of de- or counter-secularization are context-dependent and thus easily fit within the heuristics of norm contestation.

It took much longer for IR to cope with the global resurgence of religion and the mistakes of secularization theory. This is because of the fact that IR itself is a secular (biased) discipline. In line with the Enlightenment critique of religion, the “fetishization” of the Westphalian paradigm dictated a dominant secular narrative within IR (May et al. 2014: 332–336). From its very beginning, the secular was enshrined within the discipline, despite the Judeo-Christian influences and the context-dependent, specifically Christian historical process of secularization. Seen in this way, the dominant narrative of secularism is a Western, European, Christian “story,” and IR, a secular discipline inherently biased. This is why IR took so long, and had a bit of a hustle, to tackle this blind spot, religion and – as its counterpart – secularism and to finally question and reveal its own normative bias in this respect. Similar to conventional IR norm research, this bias entails a Eurocentric predisposition, assuming that the secular norm will unidirectionally diffuse
in all countries resulting in “the same ‘secular’ political order with the same ‘public’-‘private’ distinction” (Hallward 2008: 6; Hurd 2007). In contrast to an overall “compliance” in this sense, divergent secular orders manifest a huge variance in “secular norm compliance” because of divergent socio-cultural contexts, rather revealing processes of norm contestation or norm localization.

Attempts to unveil this bias revealed secularism as a “quasi-religious ideology” (Hallward 2008: 3) and “a faith intolerant of other faiths” (Hurd 2004: 256) and IR as debating “within a single church” (Hurd 2010). Indeed, after a long and insistent period of neglect, more and more IR scholars have recognized the existence of multiple secularities, incorporated the sociological critique of secularization and adopted critical perspectives that pay attention to the context-specific, historical and divergent normative influences and trajectories of secularism. Instead of static and taken-for-granted categories of “religion” and “secular,” which mutually exclude each other, their relationship is conceived as dynamic and flexible, interrelated with historical configurations and context-dependent. Understood as a mode of governance, secularism is the historical contingent result of highly contested political negotiations over the (public) role of religion in politics (Hallward 2008: 3–6): “this ongoing contestation is a dual, interrelated process of repoliticization of the private religious and moral spheres and renormativization of the public economic and political spheres” (Casanova 1994: 5–6). As such, it takes the shape of inner-state contestation processes, which are highly contested struggles between local actors within the same context but with different meanings and interpretations.

To overcome the religious–secular binary, we can capture the resurgence of religion and the multiple meanings of secularism within the concept of post-secular (inter)national politics (Habermas 2008; Mavelli and Petito 2012; May et al. 2014). This move is particularly important in both respects, analytically and normatively: analytically, because the boundaries between the religious and the secular are blurred when, on one hand, religious actors use secular arguments in public discourse, and on the other, secular gatekeepers define what is acceptable or unacceptable (Hallward 2008: 3, 6; Kayaoglu 2014; Badri 2016). From a normative stance, the gatekeeping function is a question of legitimate power. Normatively the connected translation issue appears much more problematic (Habermas 2005): by translating religious arguments into secular terminology, religious actors make themselves vulnerable to secular counter-arguments (Kayaoglu 2014); moreover, these translation efforts disclose an uneven playing field, or an unequal access to contestation (Badri 2016).

But, obviously, there is a need for a re-normativization of the public sphere by explicit religious normative stances. After secularization excluded religion from public discourse modern society lost a vital moral source (Habermas 2005). Quite similarly, the modern secular state rests on preconditions and foundations which it cannot guarantee by itself (Böckenförde 1976): “By excluding religion, secular society becomes impoverished” (May et al. 2014: 337). By contributing to the strengthening of the public sphere of modern societies, public religions become desirable (Casanova 1994: 8). In this sense, religious contestation can enhance the democratic legitimacy of the (global) normative constitutional order, in general, as well as a norm’s legitimacy and strength, in particular (Wiener 2007a: 6).
Consequently, and in the same line of argument, thought-out post-secularism gives room for an explicitly religious contribution to, and even conceptualization of, “liberal” values (Mavelli and Petito 2012: 931). For instance, Ghobadzadeh convincingly demonstrates how Islamic religious scholars voice their critique against visions and realities of the Islamic state and speak in favour of a secular democratic order in which religion is separated from the state but not from politics. Remarkably, they ground both their critique and their secular proposal not only on religious sources, arguments deliberately derived from revisionist readings of the Quran and the Hadith, but also from non-jurisprudential principles, such as theological and philosophical reasoning. However, they offer deliberately religious justifications for the institutional separation of religion and state or, more precisely, the emancipation of religion from the state. This is why Gobadzadeh conceptualizes this religious manifestation of secularism with the oxymoronic phrase “religious secularity” (Ghobadzadeh 2015, 2013).
Contesting post-secular discourses on the Islamic state identity in Iran

Ghobadzadeh focuses on the Shia Islamic context of Iran, the focus of this chapter. He understands religious secularity as a politico-religious discourse which contests the very idea of an Islamic state and challenges its foundational legitimacy (Ghobadzadeh 2015: 2). As a genuine Iranian product, religious secularity depicts a revisionist counter-discourse to the predominant or, rather, hegemonic, conservative-traditionalist Shia discourse which institutionalized in the unique revolutionary state system of the Islamic Republic of Iran and delivers the foundational legitimacy of the unification of religion and state. This counter-discourse among reformist religious scholars emerged at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s as a reaction to the contradictions of the Islamic state: “Disillusioned by the authoritarian excesses of the Islamic state, these scholars, who initially contributed to the institutionalization of the Islamic state in the 1980s, have re-conceptualized the notion of political Islam” (Ghobadzadeh 2015: 3, 2013: 1009). Because of their lived experiences with the Islamic Republic, the very idea of an Islamic state got “disenchanted.”

The religious secularity discourse encompasses two corresponding lines of argumentation: one which stresses the detrimental effects of an Islamic state for genuine (Islamic) religiosity and the other which argues that Islam is compatible with modern political principles like human rights, religious freedom, democracy and secularity. While the former strand posits that religion (or Islam) is incapable of offering all-encompassing governance solutions – a fact that in Iran led to the instrumentalization of Islam, subordinating religion to state politics – the latter argues that only a secular democratic state can provide a conducive environment for genuine religiosity (Ghobadzadeh 2015: 4–6). Again, religious secularity is not promoting the elimination of religion in the public sphere. Instead, it “advocates for public involvement of religion and acknowledges that through its contribution to civil society, religion preserves its role both in the public life and the political process” (Ghobadzadeh 2015: 8). Nevertheless, it does promote an institutional separation of religion and state.

Having said this, religious secularity depicts an “own brand of Iranian secularism” (Ghobadzadeh 2015: 23), a unique indigenous contribution to an Islamic trajectory of secularism: an own Islamic–secular norm which is based on Islamic sources and dynamically emerged out of its own context-specific historical configuration. In this sense, religious secularity depicts an emerging normative meaning-to-be-used structure that contests the hegemonic meaning-in-use structure which (still) is predominant in Iran.

Capturing the religious secularity discourse in reaction to the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the lived experience of the post-revolutionary state as the desecularized manifestation of political Islam (which in itself was triggered by the authoritarian secularism of the Pahlavi regime),
religious secularity itself constitutes a process of re-secularization grounded on a revisionist political Islam. Instead of being consecutive, these discursive processes are mutually constituting but in intense competition and contentious struggles over who becomes hegemonic. Indeed, their discursive and institutional hegemony is the only characteristic which might be consecutive.

In this understanding, one can analyse post-secular negotiations over the public role of religion, and the concrete institutional design of state-religion relations, as (1) contentious societal struggles between “local” actors influenced by competing discourses with divergent underlying meanings of secularism; (2) domestic/inner-state contestation processes, enacting and re-enacting normative meaning-in-use structures; or (3) post-secular struggles over the discursive hegemony of the normative meaning-in-use structure on the Islamic state identity of Iran.

Following Hurd, I conceive secularisms as a “matrix of discourses and practices that [...] play a constitutive role in creating agents that respond to the world in particular ways and in contributing to the normative structures in which these agents interact” (Hurd 2010: 135–136). These normative structures or, in critical norm research terms, normative meaning-in-use structures provide guidance for actors insofar as they structure behaviour. Taken separately, each normative structure provides role scripts, prescribes appropriate behaviour, includes and excludes and thus constitutes in- and out-groups. As with critical norm research, I contend that these secularisms as discursive normative structures which structure behaviour are both stable and flexible. If discourses are stable over a prolonged period (because their hegemonic status is not contested), the prescribed behaviour is stable; if discourses are changing (e.g. because of historical contingency), the prescribed behaviour is changing, too; if discourses are contested, the prescribed behaviour is contested as well. In the very moment of contestation, discursive frames struggle and compete for hegemony; the prescribed behaviour becomes ambiguous and opens the floor for alternative appropriations of behaviour in line with the contesting alternative counter-frame. Proponents of the contested hegemonic discursive frame try to defend the status quo by discursively reproducing its hegemonic status: “projects for cultural change are likely to provoke cultural counterprojects from those threatened by them” (Snyder 2002: 9). Altogether, the dual character of discursive normative structures as being stable and dynamically changing helps to explain the behaviour of social actors and delivers causal pathways for the variance in compliance with the norm of religious freedom and religious discrimination, respectively.

Whereas Ghobadzadeh focuses on religious secularity and state–religion relation within the revisionist Islamic discourse, I focus on a specific subordinate part within that discourse, namely religious freedom, its divergent interpretations and attitudes towards religious minorities. Moreover, while Ghobadzadeh states that this alternative politico-religious discourse influenced the political reform movement in Iran, namely the reformist era during Khatami’s presidency (1997–2005) and the Green movement (2009 onwards), I focus on how this discourse (and its struggle competing with the predominant conservative-traditionalist discourse) influences the politics of reformists (and their counterparts) regarding religious freedom and religious minorities. I do so by examining the degree of norm violation over time in three succeeding presidential terms from 1997 to 2009 – two of president Khatami and one of Ahmadinejad, respectively – focusing on the six non-Muslim religious minorities: Armenians, Assyrians and Chaldeans, Jews,
Elite identity framing, religious doctrines and attitudes towards religious minorities

In line with the contested norms argumentation, I focus on the elite’s beliefs, discourses and (symbolic) actions trying to grasp their discursive belonging and how they conceive the meaning of religious freedom and their corresponding attitudes towards the religious other. This meaning depends on their identity framing, whereby this framing is not happening in a vacuum. In fact, it ties in with an already existing collective identity (that of the Islamic Republic of Iran), shaping it into one or another discursive direction, thus enforcing or reducing norm violation. Elite identity framing conceptualizes how state elites construct, reproduce – or, rather, frame and reframe – the Islamic state identity of Iran as within the meaning-in-use structure of the hegemonic conservative-traditionalist discourse or within the revisionist Islamic discourse on religious secularity. For the former, the underlying assumption is that state elites have a vital interest in preserving the predominant frame their legitimacy and power rests on. A (perceived) threat to – or contestation of – their predominant frame equals a threat to their power. Religious freedom poses a specific threat to this frame by challenging the hegemonic meaning-in-use structure with – religiously derived – alternative interpretations of the norm, which allow alternative interpretations of religious doctrines and attitudes towards religious minorities.

Religious doctrines and their respective tolerance demands are standards of appropriate behaviour for a certain group or identity. As Fox exemplifies with certain Islamic doctrines, they can impact on norm violation:

Islam is considered the superior religion and is expected to be given the dominant status in a Muslim state. Members of such religions as Judaism and Christianity are ‘peoples of the book,’ and […] are to be tolerated, but are given second-class status.

(Fox 2008: 355)

Following this logic, believers outside the definition of “peoples of the book,” and especially adherents to religions emerging out of Islam – the so-called apostate religions or heretical Muslim sects – are among those who face the highest levels of discrimination in predominantly Muslim states. But, since religious doctrines are a matter of interpretation, their consent and validity cannot be presupposed, as shown by an internal Islamic reform debate (Kamrava 2006) as well as by their varied application: “In practice, the treatment of non-Muslims differed from one locality and historical period to the next based on the individual ruler” (Sanasarian 2000: 20). Although the extreme interpretation is most common and prominent, Kadivar, a well-known Shia religious scholars and reformist in exile, convincingly demonstrates how universal, that is equal religious freedom, can be derived from Islam’s holy scriptures as well as from the Islamic concept of independent reasoning, *ijtihad*:
even though most of the interpretations of Islam that are prevalent today augur poorly for freedom of religion and belief, a more correct interpretation, based on the sacred text and valid traditions, finds Islam highly supportive of freedom of thought or religion and easily in accord with the principles of human rights.

(Ka’divar 2006: 142)

For operationalizing the tolerance demands out of these doctrines, Appleby’s typology of religious actors is helpful in differentiating in “exclusivists,” “inclusivists” and “pluralists” and their respective tolerance attitudes towards the religious other (Appleby 2000: 13–15). Pluralists practise the highest form of “nonviolent tolerance,” in the sense of “an attitude bespeaking respect for and defense of the rights of others” (Appleby 2000: 14), and even engage in interfaith dialogue. Inclusivists practise a “civic tolerance” where the religious other is tolerated, although only partly recognizing their rights. Exclusivists practice “violent intolerance” towards the religious other. For pragmatic reasons, I differentiate between two poles this tolerance continuum depicts, dividing a rather pluralistic (moderate) and a rather exclusivist (extreme) tolerance attitude. For enquiring the identity framing of the elites in power, I focused on state officials and, again for pragmatic reasons, on the respective presidents, and classified each regarding his religious backgrounds (reform-oriented versus traditional-conservative Islam), his rhetoric statements (respectfully appreciating versus disrespectful-contemptuous) and symbolic acts and gestures (reconciliatory versus aggressive) he made during his term of government.

The elite identity framing of Khatami’s presidency can be classified as rather pluralistic/moderate while that of Ahmadinejad as extreme/exclusivist. Regarding the religious background, Khatami definitely belongs to the reform-oriented camp, influenced by the revisionist Islamic discourse on religious secularity which aims at alternative interpretations of Islam, “one that seeks not necessarily to separate Islam from the political process but instead to reform what it sees as an increasingly intolerant and opportunistically motivated interpretation of the religion” (Kamrava 2008: 2). In fact, Khatami propagated a “religious democracy” as a “third way” linking the modern state with the norms and values of Shia Islam (Akbari 2006: 9). In contrast, Ahmadinejad is affiliated to the traditional-conservative Islamic discourse which tries “to theoretically justify the continued dominance of the traditionalist clergy over the entire political system and the cultural life of the country” (Kamrava 2008: 2). His takeover can be described as a radical re-Islamization and silent securitization of the executive, being supported by strongly conservative clerics such as Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi (Akbari 2006: 12, 18). In fact, Kamrava notes that both camps are grounded in a deep-rooted “intellectual revolution,” “a revolution of ideas, a mostly silent contest over the very meaning and essence of Iranian identity” (Kamrava 2008: 1).

Regarding their rhetoric statements, Khatami can be described as showing a respectful and appreciating rhetoric. As the US State Department notes, “[i]n November 1999, President Khatami publicly stated that no one in Iran should be persecuted because of his or her religious beliefs. He added that he would defend the civil rights of all citizens, regardless of their beliefs or religion” (United States Department of State 2000). In contrast, parallel with Ahmadinejad’s takeover, a huge negative campaign against all non-Muslims started throughout all public media, and anti-Zionistic and anti-Semitic media reports were at their peak.
Concerning symbolic acts and gestures, Khatami’s pragmatism was characterized as “desacralizing” political discourse (Akbari 2004: 3) and his foreign policy marked by a “dialogue among civilizations.” Based on his initiative, a minority committee was established, which was ought to exclusively deal with the problems of religious minorities. He also released a presidential order recruiting and re-employing religious minorities in public services. In contrast, Ahmadinejad mainly attracted attention via aggressive acts and gestures. For instance, as a reaction to the Cartoon Crisis, he organized a Holocaust cartoon competition in which the reality and historicity of the Holocaust were put under question. Considering these different discursive belongings and varying elite identity framings, we can expect to find a decrease in norm violation during Khatami’s presidential term and very likely an increase during Ahmadinejad’s presidential term.

**Violent integration policies**

The assumed causal link between the elite identity framing and the degree of religious freedom violations rests on the mechanism of “violent integration.” The main hypothesis is that the more religious minorities are perceived as challenging or contesting the constructed state identity (by normative difference or actual contestatory behaviour), thus threatening state legitimacy, the more they suffer through violent “integration” policies forcing them to take over the norms and role scripts of the hegemonic frame. The elite’s objective thereby is to contain the challenging threat, preserving the national identity in accordance with the constructed identity frame and thus maintaining legitimacy for the retention of power. The determinants of this mechanism depend on how moderate/pluralistic or extreme/exclusive the collective identity constructed by state elites is and, consequently, how they frame religious freedom and deal with religious diversity and religious minorities, in particular. Following this logic, different elites with varying identity framings differ in their perception of identity threats by religious minorities, thus violating the norm to varying degrees. Consequently, norm violations could de- or increase over time, depending on the identity framing of those in power.

**Identity features of religious minorities**

In addition to the elite identity framing, the specific identity of religious minorities matters for norm violations insofar as it varies in the degree to which these minorities (perceivably) challenge the collective identity. As mentioned earlier, the identity of religious minorities in Muslim-majority countries can be distinguished in orthodox Muslims, “people of the book,” and apostate or heretical Muslim sects. Since the context of the case study conducted here is Iran and its non-Muslim religious minorities, I focus on Christian denominations, Zoroastrians and Jews as “people of the book” and the Baha’i as an apostate or heretical Muslim sect, respectively. According to these two types of religious minorities and following the findings of Sarkissian, Fox and Akbaba,
at least two varying degrees of religious discrimination or a perceived challenge or threat to the collective identity, respectively, can be expected.

To allow for a more differentiated, historic- and context-specific approach, additional identity-related factors accounting for this perceived challenge or threat need to be considered as well. Such additional identity-related factors are found in the characteristic features these minorities have. These are the association with the West, the intent to annihilate Islam (Sanasarian 2000: 155), missionary or proselytizing activities, and an ethnic bond. Different religious minorities with varying identity features are variably perceived as challenging or threatening the identity framing of those in power, and thus face religious discrimination to different degrees. Accordingly, norm violations could vary among religious minorities, depending on their specific identity features.

Assumptions

According to the conceptualizations made so far, the following assumptions and hypothesis were made: the more moderate/pluralistic the elite identity framing is, the less it seeks to preserve the unitary religious collective identity by force and vice versa. The less a religious minority is challenging the unitary religious collective identity of the state, the less it will face repression and vice versa. Note that this identity threat only needs to be a perceived one (e.g. by normative difference), not actually triggered by real action (contestatory practices) but dependent on the identity framing of the elites in power. Consequently, norm violations and state repression against religious minorities through the mechanism of violent integration policies are more likely the more those in power seek to preserve the unitary religious collective identity of the state and the more religious minorities are perceived to challenge it.

If elites with a moderate/pluralistic framing are in power and a religious minority is not perceived as a threat, repression through violent integration policies is not likely. If elites with a moderate/pluralistic framing are in power and a religious minority perceived as a threat, repression through violent integration policies is not impossible but unlikely. If elites with an extreme/exclusive framing are in power and a religious minority is not perceived as a threat, repression through violent integration policies is not impossible, but unlikely. If elites with an extreme/exclusive framing are in power and a religious minority is perceived as a threat, repression through violent integration policies is very likely.

Non-Muslim religious minorities in Iran

The non-Muslim religious minorities in Iran, beyond their difference in being recognized or not, vary in the degree to which they (perceivably) challenge the collective identity. Armenians, Assyrians and Chaldeans are among the recognized non-Muslim religious minorities. They are all bound ethnically, are not associated with the West and neither undertake any missionary
activities nor intend to annihilate Islam. Zoroastrians, recognized as well as “people of the book,” are the most assimilated religious minority because of their long history, dating back to the Persian Empire, and are deeply entangled with Persian culture, thus not being associated with the West. They are moreover bound together by the ethnic bond of being Persian, but this is not as strong (e.g. regarding intermarriages with other denominations) as in the case of other minorities such as the Armenians. Zoroastrians do not undertake missionary activities; nevertheless, their religious sermons are held in Farsi, contrary to the Armenians, Assyrians and Chaldeans. In fact, it is an open question whether their sermons in Farsi, their close cultural ties and their popularity could become a challenge to certain identity frames. Jews are also among the recognized religious minorities. Even though they have an ethnic bond and neither proselytize nor try to annihilate Islam, they are highly associated with the Shah’s regime and, of course, Israel. Evangelical Christians, mostly Muslims who have converted to Christianity, are not a recognized minority. They do not have a specific or strong ethnic bond, undertake missionary activities in Farsi and are associated with the West. The Baha’i are not recognized either. They are highly perceived as an apostate religion or heretic sect evolving out of Islam. Moreover, since their world centre is located in Israel, they are associated politically with the Israeli state as well as the Shah’s regime. Since 1983, they are forbidden by law, framed – or securitized – as a political sect involved in spying activities and conspiracy.

Considering these characteristic features, the Baha’i are expected to be perceived the most as a threat, followed by Evangelical Christians and, then, to a lesser extent Jews. Zoroastrians, Assyrians and Chaldeans as well as Armenians are not expected to challenge the collective Islamic identity, thus facing the least religious discriminations.

Varying degrees of norm violation

The “degree of norm violation” explicitly focuses on the (ill) treatment of religious minorities and served as a starting point to analyse if norm violations do vary over time and between the non-Muslim minorities. It was operationalized on the basis of the Framework for Communications of the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief (UNSR). Nevertheless, because of research pragmatic reasons the all-embracing character of the framework forced me to come to a core of religious freedom aspects relevant to my case, basically covering two dimensions: the dimension of freedom of religion or belief, with six indicators coded 0 if granted and 1 if not granted, and the dimension of discrimination on the basis of religion or belief, with six indicators coded 0 for no discrimination, 1 for ordinary discrimination and 2 for severe discrimination. Following an additive logic, the degree of norm violation for each religious minority could thus be measured on a scale ranging from 0 to 18 on a yearly basis from 1997 to 2009. Note that scoring 0 does not characterize a religious minority to be free or not facing any kind of discrimination at all. It only implies a low degree of norm violation (compared to others). Moreover, since these scores are designed and enquired for the degree of norm violation of religious minorities, they do not reveal anything about the comprehensive dimension of religious freedom in Iran in general or
the norm violations the population generally faces. The basic purpose of these indicators is to measure the change in norm violation over time and to allow for comparison of each religious minority. Again, this set of indicators is not depicting the overall dimension of violations to the norm; accordingly, they are to be understood as selective.8

The degree of norm violations was inquired qualitatively on the basis of the annual reports of the UNSR and the religious freedom specific reports of the US Department of State. These reports were analysed using qualitative content analysis by sort and number of norm violations for each non-Muslim religious minority over the period from 1997 to 2009, categorizing them in accordance with the developed indicator sets. In order to broaden the data, the annual reports of human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, were consulted as well.

As shown in Figure 7.1, the overall trend of an expected decrease in norm violation during the moderate identity framing of Khatami and an increase by the time Ahmadinejad took over power is confirmed. Furthermore, the variances between the non-Muslim religious minorities confirm the expected trend that the predominant elite frames as well as the specific minority features impact norm violations. Nevertheless, some unexpected ups and downs do occur, which the proposed assumptions cannot fully comprehend. The easiest of these unexpected trends to explain is the question why the norm violations against Armenians, Assyrians and Chaldeans, as well as Zoroastrians, scoring 1 from 1997 are not decreasing until 2000. Arguably, after Khatami’s takeover, it took some time for his identity frame and policies regarding religious minorities to effect a decrease, and this was just delayed. But, in fact, this does not explain the violent integration policies the Baha’i and Evangelical Christians suffered in 1998 and the Jews suffered continually from 1998 to 2000. The same goes for the increases in norm violations starting in 2003, at the end of Khatami’s presidential term. While these two occurrences are still explicable with inner-state dynamics, the heavy ups and downs in Ahmadinejad’s term are not.
In fact, the two terms in office of Khatami were deeply shaped by the inter-factional rivalry of the Islamic Republic’s political system. While Khatami started his “controlled liberalization” efforts, shifting the collective identity towards a more plural-istic and moderate frame, conservative elites, especially in the judiciary and in the security services apparatus of the executive, perceived this move as a threat to their hold on power: “The appearance of an alternative symbolic universe poses a threat because its very existence demonstrates that one’s own universe is less than inevitable” (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 100). Perceiving a challenge to the status quo by the liberalization and moderate framing efforts Khatami initiated, they had to react or, as Snyder argues, counteract: “projects for cultural change are likely to provoke cultural counterprojects from those threatened by them” (Snyder 2002: 9). Accordingly, they tried to defend or preserve
their extreme or exclusivist identity framing from change and, simultaneously, delegitimate Khatami’s reputation at the domestic and international level. For instance, the rapid increase in norm violation against the Baha’i, Evangelical Christians and Jews in 1998 coincides with Khatami’s visit to the UN, where he initiated his Dialogue among Civilizations (Sanasarian 2000: 159). In the same line, in 1999, the UNSR argued that these incidences had to be seen within the special Iranian context “either as reflecting its maintenance of a policy of intolerance and discrimination, particularly against the Baha’is, or as revealing a strategy on the part of conservatives to thwart President Khatami’s progressive advances, or as both at once.” These sorts of setbacks caused “from within” commonly occur in countries in transition, with the reform discourse in Muslim countries causing a conservative re-Islamization, as Akbari argues (2006: 12). Indeed, this was intensified by the parliamentary elections in February 2004, when the reformists surrounding Khatami suffered huge losses because, inter alia, the Guardian Council didn’t approve many of its candidates (Akbari 2006: 12). The ground regained by conservatives (and the institutional power they maintained in the judiciary and in the security services apparatus of the executive) could thus explain the increase of norm violations in that year.

**Alternative explanations – external pressure**

However, another alternative explanation accounts for the several violent integration policies taking place during Ahmadinejad’s presidency: external pressures amplified the mechanism of violent integration policies. External pressure can set in motion a “rally around the flag effect,” leading to nationalistic or, in this case, exclusivist Islamist discourses in order to increase domestic support and legitimacy in the face of international criticism (Risse and Ropp 1999: 243). For instance, Ahmadinejad’s huge negative campaign against all non-Muslims “stressed the importance of Islam in enhancing “national solidarity” and mandated that government-controlled media emphasize Islamic culture in order to “cause subcultures to adapt themselves to public culture” (United States Department of State 2006). Conceived as such, the state “channels” the external pressure it faces by passing it on to the most vulnerable from within, the religious minorities. Thus, external pressure is not the cause of violent integration policies but their possible accelerator, amplifying their impact.

Note that external pressure doesn’t necessarily need to be norm specific. Indeed, we can differentiate between (1) norm-specific external pressure, in this case mostly by the UNSR (and, to a lesser extent, the emerging religious freedom specific advocacy network); (2) a more general transnational pressure, for instance those of Amnesty International’s campaigning against Iran’s human rights record; and (3) pressure from the international community, specifically the immense pressure the international community used to settle the nuclear crisis with Iran. Although this nexus is even more complex since we leave the domestic sphere entering the inter- or transnational level, it is at least plausible: by paralleling the timeline of norm violations with the three forms of external pressures Iran faced during this period, the peaks of these pressures coincide with the respective peaks caused by (amplified) violent integration policies. This is a
plausible nexus which needs to be focused on in further research.
Conclusion

Post-secular struggles over the Islamic identity of Iran seem to help with exploring causal explanations for varying religious discrimination. Contentious discourses over the meaning of religious freedom, alternative interpretations of religious doctrines and the attitudes towards religious minorities fit well for unveiling causal mechanisms that transmit casual factors to varying degrees of norm violation. Indeed, both rational-choice and identity-related factors have their say in explaining religious discrimination. Whereas research on religious freedom and religious minorities discusses whether ideational factors like religious doctrines and the identity of religious minorities ultimately are predictable by rational-choice based arguments, I contend that this approach suffers from a constructivist gap. It is not about which of them actually matters; it is much more about what constructivism, in general, tells us about bridging the rationalistic-constructivist divide: to know what I want, I need to know who I am. While rational-choice arguments alone can explain why religious minorities, in general, suffer discrimination, the varying degrees of religious discrimination cannot be fully comprehended without considering the impact of identity on actor’s preferences.

Combining research on religious freedom and religious minorities with critical norm research, multiple modernities/secularities and post-secular (inter)national politics, enables us to come closer to a comprehensive, though not exhausting, explanation and understanding of religious freedom violations. Capturing these norm violations as post-secular struggles within the heuristics of norm contestation by focusing on inner-state contestation processes within the very same socio-cultural context, but by local actors influenced by competing discourses, adds considerable value to critical norm research. However, the depicted post-secular struggles are context-dependent and only speak for the within-case analysis conducted here. Nevertheless, they convincingly demonstrate that the normative power of contestatory discourses to actually change the status quo is limited. Institutional power matters as well, especially in the highly complex state system of Iran, in which conservative-traditionalist interpretations of Islam institutionally captured the whole body politic and discursively became the predominant source of state identity. If contesting discourses (meaning-to-be-used structures) fail to institutionalize adequately, their socio-cultural validation will not be put into practice, leaving enough room for opponents of the contested discourse to counteract, defending and reframing their hegemonic meaning-in-use structure.
Notes

1 More specifically, the recognition of religious minorities is selected in accordance with conservative-
traditionalist interpretations of Islamic law.

2 In fact, the very idea of “citizen” (sharvand) is problematic in Iran. See the current Citizens’ Rights Charter
proposal by president Rouhani. The very word sharvand is absent in both civil and penal codes.

3 Whereas secularization as the differentiation of the religious and secular sphere is still defensible (Casanova

4 Indeed, post-secularism “prompted the idea that values such as democracy, freedom, equality, inclusion, and
justice may not necessarily be best pursued within an exclusively immanent secular framework” (Mavelli and
Petito 2012: 931).

5 Quite similar, but in a broader context, Sanasarian (2000: 5–6) differentiates between two sets of elite
preferences regarding pluralism: one in which elites refuse to accept or tolerate pluralism in society and one in
which elites accept pluralism as an inevitable fact. Although the Islamic Republic of Iran, contrary to the Shah’s
regime, is situated in the latter setting, there is still room for elites to choose who or which groups are to be
accepted and how to deal with them.

6 Although it would be interesting to include the Sunni minority into the sample, the specific focus of non-
Muslim minorities required their omission. In contrast, the Baha’i do not count as Muslim since neither their
self-perception nor that of Iranian state officials is conceived that way.

7 Whereas the latter could make a perceived challenge or threat less likely since it is assumable that an additional
ethnic bond hinders the spread of another religious alternative competing with that of the dominant or
majority religion, the former makes it more likely.

8 Since the case study presented here was conducted in late 2009 and early 2010, to my best knowledge there was
no reliable dataset available differentiating separate scores for each minority, forcing me to elaborate my own
set of indicators and analysing the respective reports accordingly. Moreover, other reasons spoke against using
the RASM data set anyways: the context-specific approach, trying to grasp qualitatively possible causal factors
and their underlying causal chains. Furthermore, the RASM data set only covers religious minorities that meet
a minimum population threshold of 0.25%, which would exclude some of the selected non-Muslim religious
minorities.

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Belying the human web

Islam, international affairs and the danger of a single story

Nicholas P. Roberts

We should never reduce the Other to our enemy, to the bearer of false knowledge... always within him or her there is the Absolute of the impenetrable abyss of another person.

– Slavoj Zizek (2002: 67)

On 7 December 2015, then Republican candidate for president of the US Donald Trump declared, “Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what is going on” (Johnson, 2015). On another occasion, he called for all Muslims to wear identification badges and stated, “I want surveillance of these people” (Vitali, 2015). Trump’s declarations came amid his critique of President Obama for not using the phrase “radical Islam” when talking about Muslims (Nakamura, 2016; Qiu, 2016). Granted, there is a need for vigorous debate about defining the nature of those who commit global terror; however, the problem with Trump’s rhetoric is that the only Islam he speaks of is radical Islam, thus linking Muslims with the adjective radical in the minds of those who listen to him. But the President’s rhetoric reflects a deeper problem. The labels many Americans use when referring to phenomena throughout the world are deeply flawed because they fail to account for the ideas or actions of the US in creating, sustaining and shaping the very phenomena under question.

In response to Trump’s calls for surveillance and use of the phrase “radical Islam,” the social media activist Marwa Balkar, as part of the #notinmyname campaign, attached a peace sign to her clothing as her identification. Her response went viral. “As long as Trump continues to make statements like this,” she said, “I will continue to fight back, because I need to protect who I am” (Fusion, 2016; Balkar, 2015). Miss Balkar’s statement can be interpreted as a response to worlding, to borrow the label from the Routledge series in which the present volume is a part. The concept of worlding is best understood as a complicated process in which social constructions and structures of power interact to affect knowledge and shape perceptions, especially of the “Other.”

Sociologists Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann introduced the term “social constructions” in 1966 with the publication of their influential work, The Social Construction of Reality. Berger and Luckmann demonstrated how people, after naturally forming themselves into groups, create
concepts and representations of others that become accepted as reality. Moreover, Berger and Luckmann demonstrated how these social constructions of reality become institutionalized, embedding meaning and knowledge into the very fabric of a society. A year later, Berger built on *The Social Construction of Reality* with his work *The Sacred Canopy*, in which he introduced his concept of *world construction*. "Every human society is an enterprise of world-building," he wrote. "Religion occupies a distinctive place in this enterprise" (Berger, 1967: 3). Accordingly, Berger showed how “society is the product of man” and “man is the product of society” (Ibid).

Yet, for Berger, the individual does not merely absorb “the social world”; rather, social worlds are actively “appropriated” by people (Ibid, 18). Thus, “The socially constructed world is, above all, an ordering of experience. A meaningful order, or nomos, is imposed upon the discrete experiences and meanings of individuals” (Ibid, 19). Language is paramount in world construction and the social construction of reality. “Language nomizes by imposing differentiation and structure upon the ongoing flux of experience,” stated Berger. “As an item of experience is named, it is *ipso facto*, taken out of this flux and given stability as the entity so named” (Ibid, 20). The case of Donald Trump referring only to Islam when it is prefaced by the adjective radical, and by othering Muslims as uniquely different from non-Muslims, is a real-world example of *worlding* or world construction, and it is also an example of religion building.

Religion building is the practice of one group ascribing and prescribing meaning for a religious tradition of another group to an extent that it becomes generally accepted as truth. One important work on this subject was the historian Wilfred Cantwell Smith’s (1962) book *The Meaning and End of Religion*. Smith differentiated between “faith” and what he termed “cumulative tradition,” and argued that these concepts have been inaccurately combined and subsumed within the modern concept of “religion.” Religion, as a clearly defined ideology with a particular name, encapsulated within certain communities of people and organized around a set of creeds, is a modern, Western invention. No classical language – neither the Greek of the New Testament, the Sanskrit of the Vedas or Upanishads, nor even the Arabic of the Quran – has a word that represents the modern concept of religion.

The cumulative tradition of Muslim societies has been nomized by being named Islam and thus has been given a sort of stability that distracts from understanding it as a community of discourse. Granted, the faith and cumulative tradition of Muslims were revealed by God with the built-in name of *islam* as their *din* (Smith, 1962: 80). However, as scholars such as Ebrahim Moosa have repeatedly demonstrated, there are significant differences between the Quranic concept of *din* and the post-Enlightenment European concept of religion (Moosa, 2014: 39; Moosa, 2016).\(^1\) The adoption by Muslims of the word *din* to denote the European concept of religion can be understood as a conceptual capitulation to European geopolitical and intellectual hegemony and its ensuing ability to define the terms of the conversation about the meanings and ends of religion.

A major theme of modern history has been the interaction between communities of Muslims with “the West” as a locus of cultural and political power.\(^2\) Religion building and world construction have been one component of Western power in these interactions. As scholar of religion Richard King reminds us, “religion and culture are the field in which power relations
operate” (1999: 1). As King also cogently observed, the concept of “the West” is rooted in as much essentialism and as many stereotypes as “the East,” but the crucial difference is that the social construction of the idea of the West occurred in the hands of those with dominant power while the social construction of peoples in “the East” was received by those without power as an inversion of “the West” (King, 1999: 3). The concept of “the West,” as a unique identity-entity, is important not only for how persons who self-identify as “Western” view themselves in their interactions with others but also for how Muslims, too, have understood their place in history and in international relations. Alluding to Berger’s thesis, the public intellectual and scholar of Islam Hamid Dabashi wrote, “[I]n the forced binary manufactured between ‘Islam’ and ‘the West,” Muslims as Muslims are deprived of agential autonomy to worldliness – the world in which they find themselves is already determined” (2013: 11). “In this essentialist distinction,” he continued, “‘Islam’ is often posited as a monolithic and entirely ahistorical proposition, while “the West” is presupposed in equally categorical and definitive terms – having attained in fact an ontological disposition” (Ibid).

Language is a repository of our conditions of being, called ontology. Inherent in the process that language goes through to attain an “ontological disposition” are the meanings attached to labels and whether these meanings are descriptive or prescriptive. In 2004 Robert Orsi argued that the key words of modernity, such as religion or secularism, are, in fact, prescriptive. “They make up a disciplinary nomenclature that tells us how the world must be, or as some part of the world’s population wants and insists that it be,” he argued (2004: 779). The concept of religion, as part of the disciplinary vocabulary of modernity, now has prescriptive meanings, and many of these meanings have been used to justify geopolitical power struggles between the West and other parts of the world.

One of the prescriptions for religions and religious persons in the modern era is secularism. Secularism has emerged as a perceived requisite to the nation-state model of international affairs. As such, it has presupposed “new concepts of ‘religion,’ ‘ethics,’ and ‘politics,’ and new imperatives associated with them” (Asad, 2003: 1–2). Within this Western cultural paradigm of secular normativity, the religions of ostensibly non-secular peoples have long been seen as a source of violence. Westerners have portrayed and prescribed Islam as particularly so. “Experts on ‘Islam,’ ‘the modern world,’ and ‘political philosophy’,” wrote Talal Asad, “have lectured the Muslim world yet again on its failure to embrace secularism and enter modernity and on its inability to break off from its violent roots” (Ibid, 10).

Islam has always been an important factor in world building and social constructions of reality in Christian societies and, later, the West. Over centuries, a nomized Islam was viewed as a cultural and historical other that is essentially different from Christian societies and exceptionally violent. In her book Muslims in the Western Imagination, scholar of philosophy and religion Sophia Rose Arjana traced 1,300 years of history to document how Western societies have continuously portrayed Muslims as “demons, giants, cannibals, vampires, zombies, and other monsters” and argues that these “imaginary Muslim monsters have determined the construction of the Muslim in Western thought” (2015: 1). The Crusades, of course, might be the most popular example from this history, and this spirit of religious warfare inspired countless writings and
works of art. Dante, in his *Inferno* (ca. 1314), describes Muhammad being torn apart in Hell; this literary scene was visually depicted by the artist William Blake in 1827. A popular illustration titled “La vie de Mahomet” (1699) by Humphrey Prideaux depicts Muhammad wearing a turban and Alladin-esque garb, sword in one hand and crescent moon in the other, trampling on a globe, a cross and the Ten Commandments. As Arjana states, Christians viewed themselves as “determinative of normative humanity, while everything else existed as strange, foreign, and monstrous” (2015: 4). The Protestant Reformation in Europe (1517–1648) added a new dimension to this understanding of Islam because it allowed Europeans to begin calling for a similar reformation within Islam. Near the turn of the 20th century, British Consul-General in Egypt Lord Cromer declared Islam to be a “great failure” and made its reformation official British policy, hoping to inculcate “a distinctly Christian code of morality” among Muslims (Tignor, 1962: 225; Moosa, 2009: 162–163).
“A war of ideas”

Although Cromer’s beloved British Empire is gone, his calls for a reformation of Islam are not. On the eve of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, then Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz announced, “We need an Islamic reformation, and I think there is real hope for one” (Lobe, 2004). Many others joined Wolfowitz in calling for an Islamic reformation because of the persistent belief that Islam is somehow incompatible with the Western world order. Although recent scholarship has conclusively shown how Muslims and Islam are compatible with democracy, the Western prescription that Islam is incompatible with the democratic, liberal world order and, therefore, needs reforming remains a stubborn part of the international affairs discourse.

A 2003 report for the RAND Corporation, a veritable arm of the US government, exemplifies this. The report’s author, Cheryl Bernard, refers to Islam as a clearly identifiable “thing” with maladies that can be itemized and diagnosed. “Islam’s current crisis has two main components,” she wrote:

A failure to thrive and a loss of connection to the global mainstream. The Islamic world has been marked by a long period of backwardness and comparative powerlessness... the Islamic world has fallen out of step with contemporary global culture... (2003: ix).

The solution to the “backwardness” of Islam and Muslims is reformation according to Western models and norms, she argued. “It is no easy matter to transform a major world religion. If ‘nation-building’ is a daunting task, ‘religion-building’ is immeasurably more perilous and complex” (2003: ix, 3).

Bernard claimed that the greatest threat to the US is “traditionalist Islam” – as distinct from militant groups, such as al-Qaeda, which she categorizes as fundamentalist. According to Bernard, “the philosophical underpinnings” of Islam and modernity are incompatible. “Modern democracy rests on the values of the Enlightenment; traditionalism opposes these values and sees them as a source of corruption and evil. Traditionalism is antithetical to the basic requirements of a modern democratic mind-set” (2003: 33). Bernard rejected any possibility of cooperation between the US and “traditional” Muslims for three reasons, as pointed out in a critical review by the late Saba Mahmood: first, their belief in the divinity of the Quran and a failure to regard it as a historical document; second, their failure to realize that Muhammad was a product of his time whose life offers little of practical value to solving the exigencies of modern existence; and, last, their inability to denounce the juristic tradition for its deficient and contradictory character (2006: 334).

Bernard’s conclusions formed the basis of an actual US government programme called Muslim World Outreach. The goal of this programme was “to influence not only Muslim societies but Islam itself” to spark a reformation, which was defined as a vital national security interest of the US. In more than two dozen countries, the US-funded Islamic radio and television shows, course work in Muslim schools, Muslim think tanks, political workshops and other programs that
promoted “moderate Islam” (Kaplan, 2005). Referring to the government’s goal of creating an Islamic reformation, Wolfowitz stated, “This is a battle of ideas and a battle for minds. To win the war on terror, we must win a war of ideas” (Ibid).

The rhetoric of Wolfowitz’s “war on ideas” is rooted in the (mis)perception that there is an essentially historical difference between the peoples and ideas of the West and the non-West – that the peoples of “the West” emerged from entirely different historical trajectories than did the peoples of the non-West. The creation of “the West” as a self-conscious identity-entity, in opposition to a socially constructed Islam, is a consequence of a series of historical events “whereby knowledge, ownership, subjectification and subjection become intertwined through incredible violence” (Dressler and Mandair, 2011: 8). One such event was Martin Luther’s claim of a divided self, which is derived from his Thesis 95. This thesis states, “It is a subtle evil to say that the love of God is, even in intensity, the same kind of love as that for creatures.” With this proclamation, Luther opened an intellectual space for rejecting the notion that love for God required love for other beings (Ibid).

Luther’s decoupling of the implied connection between love for God with love for others held important implications. It allowed other intellectuals, such as Kant, to create an ontological schema of human existence divided between God, self and world, in which a self-conscious, rational human being has the capacity to become itself through the other and can no longer be itself without the existence of that other. “One is conscious of oneself only as one appears to oneself,” wrote Kant. “Not as one is” (Brook, 2013). Any object of thought, in other words, must separate itself from itself. Thus, while Christians and Muslims share the same belief in God (Smith’s “faith”) and emerged from the same interconnected web of shared human history, Christendom and later Europe drew on a schema of historical difference and categorization to determine the other. Religion building (Smith’s “cumulative tradition”) was an important component of this process. The Kantian notion of self and other was expanded on by Heidegger, who analysed how the creation of the self in opposition to others eventually places the self at the centre of imagination of the world. “What Heidegger alludes to,” according to Dressler and Mandair, “is that this peculiarly modern form of thinking gradually produces the birth of the West as a self-referential system of thought, universalizing its position and discourse, claiming objectivity about human societies and cultures” (2011: 9).

The “peculiarly modern form of thinking” found in the West also provides it with a form of power, to define itself according to itself and to define others. Foucault described this form of power as the ability of those in power to divide groups of people as subjects, which, of course, is rooted in language. “The subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others,” said Foucault. “This process objectivizes him” (Foucault, 2001: 326). As examples, Foucault provided the categories of the “mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the “good boys,”” though from our perspective in 2017 we can extend Foucault’s analysis to include the creation of the categories of “moderate Islam” – as the RAND report called for – and Trump’s “radical Islam.” The annales historian Fernand Braudel drew on Foucault’s concept of power and the coinciding ability to divide in formulating his concept of a civilization. Foucault’s rendering of power deserves “close attention,” wrote Braudel, because “A civilization attains its true persona
by rejecting what troubles it... expelling from its frontiers and from its inner life any value that it spurns” (Braudel, 1994: 31).

Foucault’s concepts of power and division, combined with Braudel’s concept of civilization and its “centuries-long distillation of a collective personality” (Ibid) illuminate a genealogy of ideas found beneath the RAND Corporation’s argument that Islam has lost its “connection to the global mainstream.” The “global mainstream,” of course, is meant to be the US, or the West, more broadly. Scholars certainly take issue with the categorization of “the West,” but it remains a fundamental point of reference by Americans and Europeans who perceive themselves to be a part of such a “civilization,” especially as divided from Muslims and Islam. As political commentator Roger Cohen wrote for the New York Times: “Across a wide swath of territory... the West has been or is at war, or near-war, with the Muslim world, in a failed bid to eradicate a metastasizing Islamist movement of murderous hatred toward Western civilization” (2015).

Cohen continued to write, “Islam is a religion that has spawned multifaceted political movements whose goal is power” (Ibid). This echoes many other comments by Americans – political commentators and scholars – who argue that Islam is incompatible with modernity or American values because Muslims stubbornly cling to mixing religion and politics. Western scholars have labelled this practice “Political Islam” or “Islamism.” The invention of this label is intrinsically tied to the Western project to reform Islam because it provides a category of what the West does not want. As one scholar put it, “Political Islam is generally understood as being virulently antiwestern and as a major force contributing to global instability” (Woodward, 1996: 2).

The invention of the label Political Islam was a product of international affairs analysis in the twentieth century that fell under the paradigm of secularization theory. This theory held that modernity and world order would be characterized by secular, democratic nation-states. For example, in a 1965 volume titled Islam and International Affairs, the noted historian H. A. R. Gibb pondered, “The first question we must ask is whether the subject proposed for this discussion makes sense... Is there any real (i.e., effective) relation between religion and political action in the modern world?” (Proctor, 1965: 3). The global resurgence of religions, beginning in the latter half of the 20th century, answered Gibb’s question in the affirmative. In the 21st century, scholars and analysts agree that, throughout the world, “religion is on the rise... The major world religions are all taking advantage of the opportunities provided by globalization to transform their messages and reach a new global audience” (Thomas, 2010).

Despite a theoretical separation of “church” and “state,” some of the most significant examples of mixing religion and politics come from the US. The 2016 Republican Party platform demands that lawmakers use religion as a guide when legislating, stipulating “that man-made law must be consistent with God-given, natural rights” (Peters, 2016). Referring to his preparations for the 2003 American war in Iraq, President George W. Bush stated, “I was praying for strength to do the Lord’s will.... I pray that I be as good a messenger of His will as possible.” Later, when asked if he ever sought his father, former president George H. W. Bush, for advice, President Bush replied, “You know he is the wrong father to appeal to in terms of strength. There is a higher father that I appeal to” (Hamilton, 2004). Recall also that the leader of the American civil rights movement was
not the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., it was the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Other examples of religion in international affairs outside the US include Vladimir Putin drawing on the narrative of Russia as the seat of Orthodox Christianity to augment his expansionist foreign policy and even the increasing religiosity of the Likud and other far-right parties in Israel.

These events not only reveal the emergence of “public religions” but also reveal the transformation of secularism itself. Jose Casanova influentially argued that that religion is a part of what modernity is (Casanova, 1994). However, Talal Asad argues that this line of analysis is itself a dimension of religion building. “For when it is proposed that religion can play a positive role in modern society, it is not intended that this apply to any religion whatever,” writes Asad. “Only religions that have accepted the assumptions of liberal discourse are being commended, in which tolerance is sought on the basis of a distinctive relation between law and morality” (2003: 183). Even the most ostensibly secular of societies, then, such as France, accept some degree of Christianity in public life, but not Islam, which is assumed to be incompatible with “the assumptions of liberal discourse.” An example of this includes French police forcing Muslim women on beaches to remove their “burkinis,” while allowing Catholic women to remain on beaches covered in their habits (Campanella, 2016). The transformation of the secularization paradigm into a project by the West to build religions compatible with modernity is an important component of international affairs in the modern era. It reflects the Western ability to separate the cultural self, as both distinct from the rest of the world and the centre of it, from an Other. The West calls in a self-referential manner for secularism in the rest of the world even though the West itself is not as secular as it might claim to be.
Islamic thought and the nation-state

The interactions of different Muslim states in international affairs reflects a spectrum of islams. It is difficult to discuss how Islam coincides with international affairs not only because Islam is not a “thing” that can be easily categorized but also because international affairs – as it is known today – largely emerged in situations unique to non-Muslim peoples. The nation-state emerged as a unit of political analysis in Europe because of certain events unique to Europeans’ historical experiences. Unlike in the European case, the basic unit of analysis in Muslim political thought has not historically been the state, nor has identity construction centred on different nations. Until the events surrounding the First World War, Muslim political thought concentrated on non-state units of analysis, such as the community (umma, jama’a), justice (‘adl, shariah) and methods of leadership (khilafa, imama, sultan; Salim, 2008: 16; Scott, 2010: 13; Ayubi, 2009: 21).

The concept of “state” became a unit of analysis in Islamic thought beginning in the latter half of the 19th century. This process was cemented after the First World War because of the European imposition of nation-states in historically Muslim lands that occurred alongside the abolition of Ottoman claims to the caliphate in 1924. The word in Arabic chosen to denote this new concept of state was dawla. This word comes from the root d-w-l, which indicates something that rotates, alternates, takes turns or occurs periodically. Granted, the word dawla does appear throughout the Quran, and it is found in the writings of medieval Muslim scholars. However, in these sources the word is used to convey the fortunes, tribulations or ups and downs that any government or polity naturally experiences. According to Bernard Lewis, the first time the word dawla (devlet) appeared in its modern meaning of state, as distinct from dynasty or government, was in a Turkish memorandum of about 1837 (Ayubi, 2009: 21).

The identification of a state by a particular nation is largely foreign to the Muslim historical experience. Historically, a Muslim considered herself loyal to God; beside this, feelings of patriotism were directed towards the umma, the global Muslim community. The concept of patriotism to a territorially bounded nation-state did not arise until the late 1800s with the writings of Rifa’a al-Tahtawi, who reinvented the concept of watan (homeland) to denote “the specific meaning of territorial patriotism in the modern sense” (Hourani, 1983: 79; Dawn, 2011: 376). Before this, the word watan was “a focus of sentiment, of affection, of nostalgia, but not of loyalty, and only to a limited extent of identity” (Lewis, 1993: 136, 167–168).

Although the nation-state is not an indigenous product of Muslim history, Muslim peoples throughout the world have readily adopted it, albeit infused with soundings from Muslim political theology based on conceptions of the caliphate (Moosa, 2015: 109; Piscatori, 1986). A significant debate today among Muslims is how to adapt the empire-based jurisprudential tradition to the contemporary system of nation-states. Both Christianity and Islam have histories of political theologies being developed to fit the framework of empires. The process of the “progressive eclipse of Christendom by Europe” and the organization of politics and humans within nation-
states began, according to historian Mark Greengrass, in the 16th century (Greengrass, 2014, xxviii). The fall of Christendom led to the emergence of the non-religious label “Europe” to describe the lands that were historically part of Christian empires. The lands historically part of various Muslim empires, however, are still usually referred to as the “Islamic world,” thus perpetuating the Western prescriptive notion of a primacy of religion in shaping all aspects of Muslim life.
A mosaic of Islams

The distinguished historian Marshall Hodgson made a crucial observation when he observed: “It has been all too common, in modern scholarship, to use the terms 'Islam' and 'Islamic' too casually both for what we may call religion, and for the overall society and culture associated historically with the religion.” Hodgson distinguished among the terms Islam, Islamic and Islamicate or Islamdom, the latter referring “not directly to the religion, Islam, itself but to the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and the Muslims” (1977: 157–159). With this schema, one can see the problems with the Western tendency of labelling things “Islamic” – whether art, architecture, law, politics or society itself. Using the adjective Islamic creates a false binary that is “the product of the Orientalist imagination – branding, consuming, and alienating things from the vantage point of the Orientalists’ location” (Dabashi, 2013: 25).

There is no normative “Islamic” theory of international affairs or statecraft (Boroujerdi, 2013: 2). Aside from the shariah (not to be conflated with human law), Muslim countries differ in significant ways in terms of domestic and international law. Many countries, such as Tunisia, Algeria, Pakistan, Iran or Indonesia, are governed by secular, civil law; shariah is reserved for family law and related matters (Moosa, 2015: 111). Others, such as Saudi Arabia, continue to operate in the mode of political theology of empire. One way of illuminating this is to look at blasphemy laws. Tunisia not only eschews the death penalty for apostasy, but Article 6 of the 2014 constitution protects its citizens by making illegal any attack on them based on accusations of apostasy. Although there is no civil penal code in Saudi Arabia, the kingdom imposes the death penalty on actual or accused apostates based on some collections of hadith. These include “[i]f a Muslim discards his religion, kill him” or

[t]he blood of a Muslim who confesses that none has the right to be worshiped but Allah and that I am His Apostle, cannot be shed except in three cases: in qisas (revenge) for murder, a married person who commits illegal sexual intercourse, and the one who reverts from Islam and leaves the Muslims.

The juxtaposition between Tunisia’s blasphemy laws and Saudi Arabia’s blasphemy laws demonstrates the difference between one Muslim state that operates within a political-theological model adhering to the norms of contemporary nation-states and another Muslim state that operates within a political theology created by Muslims who were living in an age when empire was a typical mode of socio-political organization. The various hadith that Saudi Arabia uses to legitimate its laws, however, have more to do with treason – a political crime – than they do with blasphemy – a religious wrongdoing. In the political context of 7th-century Arabia, conversion to Judaism or renouncing monotheism altogether was likely to have been the result of switching allegiance to a different, more powerful, political-military group (“tribe”) than the Prophet Muhammad and his followers. However, in 2016 the conversion to a religion other than Islam has nothing to do with political allegiance between empires.
The entire preceding discussion about Islam and international affairs demands the question of what exactly is meant by Islam. Here the issue of linguistics and the normative (or prescriptive?) connotations of grammar become illustrative. In the English language, the word *Islam* is written with a capital letter *I* – as a proper noun – to denote the cumulative tradition of Muslims. The purpose of a proper noun in the English language is to denote what is properly a particular person, place or thing: Nicholas Paul Roberts refers to me as an individual and to no one else. Therefore, the itemizing of the cumulative tradition of Muslims is embedded in the very language used to describe it. The word as it was revealed by God to the Prophet in the revelation of the Quran, however, is not a noun at all. According to the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, the word *islam* in Arabic is a masdar, or a verbal noun, of the fourth form of the root *s-l-m*, which refers to the action of submission and surrender (to God). As Shahab Ahmed argued, then, *islam* is foremost “an action: it is something a person does, and it is by doing *islam* that a person makes himself or herself, in terms of that act – or, more properly, array of acts... a Muslim” (2016: 5, 101; Smith, 1962: 112).

No two persons can perform the same action in the same way. The cumulative tradition of Muslims, when referred to as the religion of Islam, is properly understood as a “community of discourse” – a mosaic of *islams* as varied as the Muslims with different races, ethnicities, languages, histories and identities who perform the act of *islam* for their shared faith. The concept of a community of discourse was first articulated by the sociolinguist Martin Nystrand in 1982. It was later expanded on by the sociologist of religion Robert Wuthnow, who wrote:

“Discourse subsumes the written as well as the verbal, the formal as well as the informal, the gestural or ritual as well as the conceptual. It occurs, however, within communities in the broadest sense of the word: communities of competing producers, of interpreters and critics, of audiences and consumers, and of patrons and other significant actors who become the subjects of discourse itself. It is only in these concrete living and breathing communities that discourse becomes meaningful.

(1989: 16; Voll, 2010: 8)

Although the discourse community of Muslims does have the built-in name of *islam* in Arabic, use of the English-language name Islam as a proper noun to describe it has provided a concrete normativity that has, inevitably, reduced it as a “living and breathing” community and prescribed it as a thing to be othered. The Western reification and prescription of Islam as a “thing” to be othered belie what has always been a key part of the cumulative tradition of Muslims, according to Shahab Ahmed: “[e]ngaging relationally – that is inter-textually and inter-epistemologically – with themselves and each other across this hermeneutical array” of *islams* (Ahmed, 2016: 99).

One way Ahmed’s claim becomes evident is to look at the different geopolitical blocs or alliances Muslim states have tried to form amongst themselves. The dissolution of the caliphate in 1924 left a void for an institution to unify the *umma* in geopolitical terms. In the decades between the world wars, most newly formed member states remained under the influence and organization of British and French colonial governments. There were no significant geopolitical blocs among Muslim states that did not involve the British or French (or Americans). After the Second World War, the primary cause for cooperation among Muslim states was resistance to the
newly formed state of Israel. The creation of Israel, and its ideological basis of religious nationalism in the form of Zionism, was a significant catalyst for the formation of Arab nationalism (and, later, pan-Islamism). The middle decades of the 20th century were consumed by wars with Israel that ended in defeats for Muslim states. In 1949, 600,000 Israelis defeated the combined armies of 40 million soldiers from Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Iraq and Lebanon.

The 1948–49 war led to concerted efforts to unify the newly formed Arab states. Leading this effort was President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, who formed the United Arab Republic (UAR) with Syria in 1958. Muslims throughout the world viewed Nasser as a steward of the umma, someone who would represent Muslim states with strength and pride on the world stage. This was made particularly evident when Nasser lobbied the US, the Soviet Union and the UN to force the withdrawal of Great Britain, France and Israel from the Suez Canal Zone in 1956. The event was perceived as a new era of Arab and Muslim strength in international affairs. This feeling, however, was short-lived. Domestic unrest in Syria led to the dissolution of the UAR in 1961. The Arab League Summit, held in Cairo in 1964, brought no solutions to the question of geopolitical organization and cooperation. The catastrophic defeat of Egypt and Syria by Israel in the 1967 war destroyed the militaries of these two countries and worldwide faith in Nasser. Yvonne Haddad described the feeling at the time: “While the Israelis felt bolstered in confidence and powerful in their strengthened position and holdings, the Arab world, defeated, stood once again naked, vulnerable, the laughingstock of the world” (1982: 41).

The 1967 defeat had a transformative effect on how many Muslims mobilized themselves in politics and international affairs. An important characteristic of Muslim states until around the 1970s was an almost radical secularism in politics and governance. Contrary to popular perception today, the history of the Middle East and other Muslim states in the modern era is largely secular or, at the very least, not dominated by religiously informed ideologies. The Ba’athists in Iraq and Syria were secular socialists. Two of the most notorious Palestinian liberationists, Leila Khaled and George Habash, were radically secular Marxists – Habash was not even Muslim. Ahmed Ben Bella, the first president of Algeria, was, likewise, a secular socialist. President Bourguiba in Tunisia famously tore the veils off women in the streets, and he symbolically drank orange juice on live television during Ramadan. Outside the Arab world, President Sukarno in Indonesia steered the country further to the Left throughout his time in office between 1945 and 1967.

Because, in part, of the failures of secularism, many Muslims began drawing increasingly on Islam both conceptually and symbolically in domestic and international affairs discourses. An early display of this was the formation, in response to an attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque, of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in 1969, which refers to itself on its website as “the collective voice of the Muslim world” (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, 2016). The formation of this group with Islam as a defining adjective of it demonstrates the growing transition in the 1960s and 1970s from secular ideologies such as socialism, Marxism or Pan-Arabism to what has been labelled “Islamism.” Interestingly, many Muslim intellectuals looked to Israel as a positive example of using religious heritage to frame the identity of the state. As the prominent Muslim Brotherhood intellectual Muhammad al-Ghazali argued, Muslim states were ruled by the heritage of certain families, such as the Saudis or Mutawakkili. If the Israelis had done the same, says al-
Ghazali, their government would be called the “Weizmannite government.” Yet, he argues,

[t]he Jews have... returned to their ancient history, dug out its roots and appeared two thousand years after Christ with the name of “Israel.” This name is the symbol of their attachment to their religion and their respect for their sacred memories. It should be observed that the Jews who have chosen to follow this course are themselves the greatest of capitalists, scientists, politicians and economists... None of these men felt ashamed to belong to their religion or thought of discarding it.


The most decisive display of the practice in Muslim states of turning to the cumulative tradition of Islam to shape politics, government and international affairs is the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. To be certain, this event was part of a global resurgence of religion in public life. However, because of the Western experience of self-referential thinking, the Iranian revolution contributed to the entrenched dogma that Islam needs a reformation or that Islam is somehow an impediment to the Western-led march toward the “end of history.” In fact, the “Islamic resurgence” reveals Islam today as an inherent part of world events and as a community of discourse – as a mosaic of islams represented by a strikingly varied discursive engagement with contemporary international affairs within the Islamic framework.

There are significant debates today among Muslims not only on the nature of the state and what Islam has to do with the state but also on secularism. The basic concept of secularism – as an institutional separation between religion and politics – becomes problematic in the Muslim context precisely because the modern concepts of secularism and religion are consequences of historical events and experiences (such as the Protestant Reformation or the European Enlightenment) unique to Europeans. Many Muslim intellectuals argue that it is possible to be both religious and secular, or “seculigious” (Voll, 2015). Similarly, the growing trend of “Muslimism” “engages aspects of modern life while submitting that life to a sacred, moral order” (Cevik, 2016: 201). For many Muslims, “religion” – as an institutionalized set of persons and practices organized around a creedal entity – is only one part of what Islam is. As Yusuf al-Qaradawi says, “[m]any think that all that is Islamic is also religious, but the fact is that Islam is broader and larger than the word ‘religion’.” As Qaradawi notes, religion/faith (din) is only one of the five components of the maqasid al-shariah (2001: 57–58).

Another important Tunisian intellectual is Rachid Ghannouchi, who argues that it is possible for a state to be both secular and religious because secularism in his conceptualization protects religion from abuses of the state. “An Islamic state is not a religious state,” he said because a religious state would denote a normative conceptualization of religion, rather than allowing the free and unobstructed worship of Islam by Muslims as they wish. “In our context,” said Ghannouchi, “the problem is one of liberating religion and keeping the latter in the societal realm, open to all Muslims to read the Qur’an and understand it in the manner that they deem appropriate” (2012; Roberts, 2015: 125).

In this way, Muslim intellectuals are at the front of important changes throughout the world in the 21st century (Roberts, 2017). As one group of scholars put it:

[T]he rise of politically active religion not only encroaches on the supposed relationship between religion and
secularism, thus challenging our thinking about the public role of religion, but it also queries our operative notions of secularism. The rise of politically active religious movements complicates our ideas about modern life.

(Calhoun, Juergensmeyer and VanAntwerpen, 2011: 6)

These movements and the intellectuals who lead them complicate the basic assumptions of those, like Bernard, who argue that Muslims are backward and not part of the global mainstream.
Historical imaginings

Bernard’s line of analysis remains dominant in international affairs discourse today. In September 2014, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared in a speech to the UN: “Our hopes and the world’s hope for peace are in danger. Because everywhere we look, militant Islam is on the march” (Haaretz.com, 2015). The most decisive display of the “militant Islam” that Netanyahu refers to is the so-called Islamic State, or ISIS. Former Republican candidate for president of the US Carly Fiorina summed up the popular Western narrative about ISIS when she stated, “What ISIS wants to do is drive us back to the Middle Ages, literally…. ISIS wants to take its territory back to the Middle Ages” (Holsinger, 2015). Fiorina is incorrect. The territory held today by ISIS was, in the time of the Middle Ages, at the centre of human progress while the territory known as Europe today was in the throes of what Europeans label the “Dark Ages.” The present-day Middle East was the land of the people who held the most ornate libraries and who gave birth to the university. As historian Paul Kennedy wrote, “[i]n mathematics, cartography, medicine and many other aspects of science and industry – in mills, guncasting, lighthouses, horsebreeding, the Muslims had enjoyed a lead” for centuries (1987: 3–4, 9–13; Roberts, 2015: 4).

Fiorina’s claims are consistent with statements from numerous American and Western officials. The tendency to label groups like ISIS as “medieval,” and to use their existence as evidence for the need of an Islamic reformation, is the latest iteration of the West portraying Muslims as stagnant or backward. The standard narrative in this line of analysis holds that, soon after its initial expansion under the Rashidun, the world of Islam began disintegrating under the Abbasid rulers in the 10th century. This decline, it is argued, was cemented by the Mongol destruction of Baghdad in 1258. The journalist Walter Lippman described this era as characterized by “backwardness and stagnation that afflicted the Moslem world between the fall of Baghdad... and the renaissance of the twentieth century” (Voll, 2010: 5). Other scholars such as Bernard Lewis and Daniel Pipes have continued this narrative, with titles such as What Went Wrong? The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East and In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power. Popular books such as these works by Lewis or Pipes have encouraged a perception of Islam in the West that is not necessarily grounded in fact.

The narrative of Muslim stagnation in modern world history, and of a clash between “Islam” and “modernity,” is incorrect in two major ways. First, “the standard gloomy picture of the Islamic world” as stagnant and receding following the Mongol invasions does not represent the actual world situation at the time. In fact, the world of Islam continuously expanded in terms of territory and cultural influence well into the 17th century (Voll, 2010: 6). William McNeill provided a particularly succinct account of this:

We are so accustomed to regard history from a European vantage point that the extraordinary scope and force of this Islamic expansion, which prefigured and overlapped the later expansion of Western Europe, often escapes attention. Yet an intelligent and informed observer of the fifteenth century could hardly have avoided
the conclusion that Islam, rather than the remote and still comparatively crude society of the European Far West, was destined to dominate the world in the following centuries.

(1991: 485)

Second, the idea of an irreconcilable clash between “modernity” and “Islam” is false. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that the emergence of the West as a cultural and geographic entity has been founded in an assimilation of Eastern inventions and ideas. Rather than bifurcated trajectories, human history and modernity, itself, must be interpreted as processes. As German philosopher Norbert Elias argued:

[N]o civilizing process in any particular human group... represents an absolute beginning. It never proceeds in vacuo, without reference to other – earlier or contemporary – civilizing processes undergone by other human groups... Civilizing processes in every society [are] parts of still longer-term civilizing processes which encompass humanity as a whole.

(Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 18)

Elias’s concept of the interconnectedness of civilization itself is a necessary temper to the question of whether there is a clash between Islam and modernity. It also provides a corrective to the notion that groups like ISIS are evidence of the backwardness of Muslims.

Another reason why the existence of groups like ISIS cannot be used as evidence for a clash between Islam and modernity is because fundamentalist-style groups, such as ISIS, al-Qaeda or the Taliban, are part of what modernity is. As fundamentalist-style groups, they are against the ideology of modernism, but they are themselves entirely modern (and strikingly Western) in how they organize themselves, how they interact in international affairs and even how they spread their messages. The image of al-Baghdadi giving his first public sermon, after declaring himself “caliph,” while wearing a conspicuous Rolex watch represents this. The Taliban, who have also been described as “medieval,” are active on a variety of social media platforms and recently created a smartphone app for their Voice of Jihad website (Amiri and Stancati, 2016). The very fact that al-Baghdadi refers to his organization as the “Islamic State” demonstrates just how rooted in modernity and, in fact, Western history it actually is. Despite the group’s intentions to root its philosophy and practice in classic Islamic texts, by referring to themselves as a “state” they are organizing themselves (at least politically) according to certain Western norms.

There has been a lively discussion among scholars and observers about the nature of ISIS. On one side of the spectrum is the journalist Graeme Wood, who published an article seeking to defy “a well-intentioned but dishonest campaign to deny the Islamic State’s medieval religious nature.” Wood concluded, “The Islamic State is Islamic. Very Islamic.” As evidence, he cited Princeton professor of Islamic studies Bernard Haykel, who declared that those who seek to brand ISIS as misguided or un-Islamic are “embarrassed and politically correct, with a cotton-candy view of their own religion” that neglects “what their religion has historically and legally required” (Wood, 2015). On the other side of the spectrum, the anthropologist and historian Daniel Martin Varisco wrote, “To the extent that what ISIS leaders are doing is repudiated by just about every reputable Islamic organization and scholar and the vast majority of Muslims everywhere, it is irresponsible
to say what they are doing is very Islamic” (Lawrence, 2015). Similarly, the historian Juan Cole said, “Very large numbers of ISIS are just criminals who mouth pious slogans. They engage in drug and other smuggling and in human trafficking and delight in mass murder. They are criminals and sociopaths” (Cole, 2015). Yet, as the sage professor of religion Bruce Lawrence says, this discourse revolves around the “slippery” issue of “Who is a “real” Muslim?” (Lawrence, 2015). Even Professor Haykel alluded to the slippery issue of defining and reifying Islam when he said, “As if there is such a thing as ‘Islam’!” (Wood, 2015). However well-intentioned this debate might be, it can be interpreted as a present-day example of Western prescriptions of what Islam is or isn’t.

The notion of a clash between Islam and modernity or the tendency to view ISIS as evidence of the need for an Islamic reformation demonstrates the failure to view Islam as a community of discourse. It is rarely covered in Western media or analysis that the largest Muslim group in the world, Nadhlatul Ulama in Indonesia, which claims more than fifty million members, has engaged in a relentless campaign to counter the ideology espoused by ISIS. “We are directly challenging the idea of ISIS, which wants Islam to be uniform, meaning that if there is any other idea of Islam that is not following their ideas, those people are infidels who must be killed,” stated Yahya Cholil Staquf, general secretary to the Nahdlatul Ulama supreme council. “We will show that is not the case with Islam” (Cochrane, 2015). Accordingly, the group released a film in several different languages that explores the cosmopolitan essence of Islam in Indonesia. The film draws on traditional Indonesian Buddhist and Hindu concepts and symbols in framing a spiritual interpretation of Islam that transcends territorial and identity boundaries.
Belying the human web

Human history has always been characterized by interconnected webs of human interaction. As such, ISIS might be “Islamic, very Islamic,” but it is also Western – organized around a state bureaucracy, using Western military tactics. It is also modern, very modern. The concept of “human webs” received its most complete articulation from father-and-son historians J. R. and William McNeill (2003). The McNeills argued that history can be characterized by human webs, including rivalry and cooperation, worship, economic or ecological exchange and even military competition. The modern states of Yemen and Oman might be part of the Arabian Peninsula and thus tied to its identity and history, but they are also part of the Indian Ocean basin and its mixture of Persian, Indian, African, British, Portuguese and Arabian identities. Saudi Arabia or Qatar might view themselves as upholders of a pristine, unadorned Islamic tradition rooted in Wahhabism, but their skylines – built by peoples from places such as the Philippines, Bangladesh and India – demonstrate the epitome of a Western-influenced modernity. The tangled natures of how identities are constructed were also illustrated by Norbert Elias. In *The Civilizing Process*, Elias developed his idea of “psychologization.” This concept is linked to the idea that

as webs of interdependence spread, more people become involved in more complex and impenetrable relationships.... This produces pressures toward greater consideration of the consequences of one’s own actions for other people on whom one is in one way or another dependent.

(Mennell and Goudsblom, 1998: 18)

Thus, it becomes nearly impossible to separate the rise of ISIS from decades of American sanctions in Iraq and the utter destruction of that country in the American-led 2003 war. ISIS might be “Islamic, very Islamic” but the factors that led to its rise and, so far, maintain its presence also make it American, very American. With this ontology of human webs of interaction, then, it becomes nearly impossible to discuss “Islam and international affairs” because any discussion of Islam necessarily requires a discussion of Christianity, of Judaism, of Hinduism, of the West and of the building of these religions throughout history, of the emergence of secularism and so forth until eventually the discourse becomes too convoluted to even consider.

An analytical framework rooted in human webs of interaction rather than self-referential binaries of opposition makes it easier to see how concepts such as religion – or any other form of identity – are constructed in reference to an Other. In the classic words of Edward Said, “[n]o one today is purely one thing” (1994: 407). It is the outsider who creates identity labels and reifies them as denotable existents. It is, therefore, profoundly important to construct, as much as possible, historical or cultural analysis from the perspective of those under study. One way of looking at current aspects of religion building in public consciousness is by observing the means of knowledge production. In 2016, the Internet is a major source of knowledge. Perform a simple Google search of the phrase “Islam in Egypt,” and the titles of some of the first results produced
are “The Process of Islamization in Egypt,” “The rise of Islam in Egypt, and Islamic persecution of Christians” or “History of Jihad against the Egyptian Coptic Christians.” The titles of these search results do not reveal that, in fact, the largest Muslim organizations in Egypt are non-political Sufi organizations, which have absolutely nothing to do with “jihad” or “Islamic persecution of Christians.” A Google query of “Sufism in Egypt” reveals very little of serious academic study. Conversely, a query of “Salafism in Egypt” immediately reveals rigorous academic studies from reputable sources, such as the Carnegie Middle East Center, Harvard University and George Washington University.

The effects of prescriptive religion building and world building are real. In a letter to the editor of the Wall Street Journal dated 9 June 2016, Carolyn Disco of Merrimack, New Hampshire praised Bernard Lewis on his 100th birthday for reminding “the West of 14 centuries of conflict with Islam, in which Islam’s ascendancy for a millennium is not forgotten, but to be reclaimed.” While a historical account of fourteen centuries of conflict between “the West” and “Islam” could be crafted, so, too, could an account of fourteen centuries of largely peaceful exchanges of peoples, ideas and goods between “the West” and “Islam.” Some readers might object to this line of analysis, countering that not all Americans, for example, hold views similar to Disco’s. However true, such an argument fails to account for the institutionalized, structural dynamics of power in shaping public discourse and perceptions of reality. According to a 2014 Zogby Associates poll, Arabs and Muslims have the highest unfavourable ratings and the lowest favourable ratings amongst Americans. According to a 2014 Pew poll, Muslims are rated by Americans most negatively of all religious groups, more negatively even than atheists. According to a 2015 Public Religion Research Institute survey, 56% of Americans believe that “Islamic values” are at odds with “American values” (Islamic Networks Group, 2018). According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, hate crimes against Muslims in the US surged in 2015 to their highest levels since September 11, 2001 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016). These effects do not only apply to non-Muslims. A serious concern today is growing “Islamophobia” of Muslims (or persons of Muslim heritage) against other Muslims. In February 2016, Adonis, often considered the greatest living poet of the Arabic language, stated that Islam could not be modernized and that it produced nothing of any intellectual significance (Meister, 2016).

In the final analysis, there are as many different islams as there are Muslims, and these islams are at the forefront of important changes taking place throughout the world today. The terms that have been customarily used to analyse international affairs are becoming increasingly obsolete as things like the nature of states and democracy and secularism are challenged. In the first decades of the 21st century, the West’s monopoly on ideas is being eroded, and an entire social and political lexicon is becoming obsolete (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2014). This is a process still underway, and to conclude something about it as yet would likely be proved wrong. However, what is certain is the need in the new glocal age to move away from interpreting human events through the old binaries of Western prescriptive constructions of the world.

In a presentation titled “The Danger of a Single Story,” the novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie describes how those in power have nkali. Nkali is a Nigerian word referring to the ability not just to tell the story of another person but to make it the defining story of that person. And all
stories, of course, are open to debate. “Start the story of the United States with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have an entirely different story,” she says. “Start the story with the failure of the African state, and not with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different story” (2009).

We could just as easily say the following: Start the story of ISIS with certain verses of the Quran and hadith, or books of classical Islamic law that deal with thievery or slavery, and ISIS becomes Islamic, very Islamic. Start the story, however, with decades of American support for dictators in the Middle East, American funding, training and support of Osama bin Laden and the mujahedeen, more than a decade of American sanctions against the Iraqi people that killed half a million innocents, including several hundred thousand children, or with the American invasion of Iraq that shattered the country and killed hundreds of thousands more civilians, or with the American prisons in Iraq that incubated radicalism, and ISIS becomes American, very American.

The labels and methods used by many analysts in the US when studying phenomena throughout the world are deeply flawed because they fail to account for the ideas or actions of the US as causal factors in creating, sustaining and shaping the very phenomena under study. The US creates a single story for the world and falls victim to this story’s own myopia. As Adichie says, the danger of a single story is that it emphasizes how people are disconnected rather than tied up in impenetrable human webs. “We should never reduce the Other to our enemy,” warned the philosopher Slavoj Zizek. “Always within him or her there is the Absolute of the impenetrable abyss of another person” (Zizek, 2002: 67). In 2018, with increasing calls for Muslims to collectively apologize for the actions of a few or calls for American Muslims to disavow shariah or be deported, the danger of a single story – when faced with a shared human web of human history – makes the effort to transcend superficial prescriptions of identity absolutely crucial.
Notes

1 Drawing on classical works of lexicography and philology, Ebrahim Moosa characterizes din as “a divinely assigned order or salvation path” that is intimately and indissolubly linked “to the embodiment of character, moral excellence (khuluq) and performative acts (‘amal).” “Din in the Qur’anic lexicon is imagined to be almost identical to an approved ethos of how to do things in the right way,” he states. The renowned Indian scholar and philologist-lexicologist Muhammad A’la al-Tahanawi (d. ~1777) noted that one of the literal meanings of din is ‘ada, custom or convention. Moosa cites Tahanawi further defining din to literally mean accountability, decree, compel, or obedience. “In its most explicit sense,” notes Moosa, “din is about the everyday and regular living in accordance with a prevailing ethical standard or norm.” See Ebrahim Moosa, “Qur’anic Ethics,” in The Oxford Handbook of Qur’anic Studies, ed. by Muhammad Abdel Haleem and Mustafa Shah, forthcoming.

2 For how the West has developed as a concept see L. Hunt (2012), The Making of the West, 2 vols., New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s.


5 Oklahoma state legislator John Bennett claimed, in 2014, “Islam is not even a religion; it is a social, political system that uses a deity to advance its agenda of global conquest.” Former national security advisor to the president of the US, Michael Flynn, claimed, “Islam is a political ideology [that] hides behind the notion of it being a religion.” Popular websites such as www.PoliticalIslam.com claim to use “statistical methods” to “prove” that “Islam is far more of a political system than a religion.” See Michael Schulson, “Why do so many Americans believe that Islam is a political ideology, not a religion?” The Washington Post, February 3, 2017, accessed November 2, 2017, www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/02/03/why-do-so-many-americans-believe-that-islam-is-a-political-ideology-not-a-religion/?utm_term=.6e6fc53d2891.


8 Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 9, Book 83, No. 17. Available at: www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/hadith/bukhari/083-sbt.php#009.083.017. As Fred Donner suggests, this particular hadith can be interpreted along the lines of...
political theology of empire; the Prophet might very likely have not been referring to a Muslim converting to Christianity or Judaism but, rather, any Muslim (one who submits to God) renouncing monotheism and joining the political/military ranks of enemy pagan tribes. See F. Donner (2012), *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.


12 The video can be accessed at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLEi5ED -Xw&feature=share](www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLEi5ED -Xw&feature=share).
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New York: Verso.
9

Foreign policies of political Islam movements

Of the use and reconstruction of an ideological reference

Mohamed-Ali Adraoui

Islamism now dates back a hundred years. Concern over members of this political and religious movement relates to their putative and potential radical – or even violent – behaviour when confronted with cultural otherness. Such behaviour takes root in their assumed wish to redesign the world in their image. From its inception in the 1920s to its more recent manifestations, the Islamist movement strove to lift Muslim societies out of their alleged civilizational lethargy. In so doing, it has paid substantial attention to the state of international affairs, as well as the potential ways of acting on them. If the state remains undeniably the privileged arena of Islamist movements for action – considerations for the environment of Muslim countries, devising strategies aimed at the completion of a “motherland of believers” (al-Umma) and thoughts on an interstate order within an Islamic frame of reference – remain prominent concerns to them. From its outset, Islamism has always insisted on the duty to serve religion as a whole – and thus everyone identifying with it. Its end goal therefore overrides geographical, historical, cultural, ethnic and political borders – those being perceived as divisive and debilitating to Islam. In addition, Islamists consider the current international order as one consciously designed by non-Muslims. In such views, the latter nurses an ontological enmity towards Islam because of its revisionist potential. The Arab revolutions initiated in 2010 have been experimental fields of the oppositional – even revolutionary – dimensions of Islamist ideology. These events have enabled questions to be raised on the practice and possible evolutions of Islamism. In other words, how do Islamist movements translate fundamental diplomatic and relational principles into practice with other actors of the international system? If Islamist forces are indeed maintaining special relationships with the outside world mainly driven by the wish to expand Islam’s interests, is it analytically relevant to identify a specific Islamist practice of international affairs?

This chapter has two objectives. First, it attempts to shed light on how Islamist activists, leaders and theorists view the world. This is achieved through an analysis of Islamist speeches and intellectual production. Second, it aims to provide an answer to the following question: When Islamist officials had the chance to approach national decision-making arenas – as they have in the countries that have experienced the Arab Spring – how did they manage to put up a foreign
policy agenda centred on an Islamic framework? Such is the central question of this contribution – as it allows one to measure the empirical outreach of the Islamist ideology. When uncovered, does the underlying logic at work in Islamist foreign policy reveal inconsistencies between the stated goals of Islamist powers’ and their actual diplomatic practices, or even clear deviations from their original plans? In other words, does one observe the coherence and strength of Islamism’s ideological offer “in action,” or are structural factors impeding Islamist actors – self-declared players that “do not abide by the rules” – from disseminating their worldview on a global scale?
Methodological clarifications

From the analysis of Islamists’ agenda and discourse, final conclusions cannot be drawn regarding their relationship to the world or their strategic and political positioning. Indeed, the inherent principles of Islamist movements, added to their conflicting ties with the authoritarian regimes in place and their historical and geographical diffusion, hardly makes Islamism a centralized movement. Therefore, it does not provide a regular and transparent intellectual output explaining the policies and issues its theorists, executive branch and activists wish to discuss, if not act on. Measuring the consistent and potential evolution of the Islamist ideology relies heavily on highly metaphorical texts provided by key thinkers of the movement. These tend to focus on issues concerning the religious dimension rather than on a foreign policy agenda *per se* – one that could lead to in-depth internal reforms of Muslim states. A major finding in this respect is the shared usage of a “grammar” (with other actors) that is usually associated with the Realist school of international relations. Political Islam undeniably presents the world in anarchic terms that take root in political differences – themselves stemming from diverging cultural attributes. According to Islamists, the Muslim civilization is for obvious reasons subject to enmity, for it is considered a serious competitor for moral and strategic leadership. Therefore, in order to adequately grasp what resembles more world perceptions than an ideological system with rigorous scientific ambit, this work will adopt a sociological constructivist approach. This toolkit will allow for close scrutiny of the ideology’s main stakeholders’ views, while systematically being particularly attentive to the group’s internal diversity and to the different contexts that have seen the Islamist movements emerge. For that matter, an important remark needs to be made. Studying these movements’ vision of international affairs demands paying considerable attention to century-old “canonical” proponents of Islamism while embracing the views of contemporary Islamist activists who sometimes distinguish themselves through new frameworks that rupture with the original ideology. These had grown in numbers hand-in-hand with the creation and integration – when they could or would – of Islamist political parties within the electoral rule, and the accession of Islamist parties, on rare occasions, to power. In other words, these are the visions of the world held by Islamists rather than Islamism.

Moving back and forth between the fundamental texts of Political Islam to the visions of activists of Islamist movements that take root in societies that they wish to rule according to their own understanding of these principles – which they defend once in power – is crucial. Since we cannot be exhaustive when it comes to highlighting the whole of the Islamist writings that deal with international affairs, we focus only on the declarations and texts of main Islamists. This overview helps facilitate the understanding of the major ideological changes that are observable in the Islamist field. That is why we have opted for terms of International Relations theory, specifically, the interpretative constructivist approach. The constructivist analyses, which state that the interest of an agent is determined by the inter-representational configurations in which
he or she is in, gives a central position to the speeches and public statements. This sheds light on the ideational structure referring to ideas, images and representations echoing to “subjective claims about descriptions of the world, causal relationships, or the normative legitimacy of certain actions.”

Many reasons prevent the activists’ positioning from being understood as either tangible or objective: scarce are Islamist sources related to foreign policy, strong is the view often held that Islamists may have a hidden agenda (such as the suspicion that their end goal is to subdue the social body to an extremist norm) or, again, constraining is the insufficient historical hindsight allowing strong conclusions (should that be even possible?) to be drawn. Although speeches or reactions to changes in Islamists’ environment are readily available, it remains difficult to clearly define the national interests that they wish to pursue. If references to common themes such as Muslim unity in the world, the defence of “Palestinian brothers” or the unavoidable mistrust in “Western arrogance” are repeatedly made in Islamist discourses. However, once it has been agreed that Islamism must be translated into a foreign policy agenda, space is left for debate, interpretations and adjustments. This space constrains Islamists, who inherit unwillingly the stage on which they act. In addition, on top of espousing religious rhetoric, Islamists also then become first and foremost responsible for a state’s position in the world.

Consequently, a constructivist framework of analysis is used in order to pin down the logic and contours motivating Islamist views on the specific space(s) allocated to Islam and Muslims in the contemporary era. The constructivist approach focuses on the subjectivity of Islamist international interests, making use of its sociology and analysing its contradictions, evolutionary possibilities as well as its relationship to society and to ideology instead of using the putative “objective” and predefined concept of interest as evident in other approaches. The social construction at the basis of their speeches and actions should be understood in light of a constant interaction with the local, national, regional and global spheres. Starting out with the assumption that the world is a social construct, internal and external factors affecting the Islamist Weltanschauung, as well as the rationales that determine foreign policy discourses and practice are analysed. Because Islamist activists and politicians are both principals and agents of a religious – but not solely – “system of perceptions,” they produce and promote views, action schemes and particular definitions of their state’s and Muslim counterparts’ interests. This is fundamental in that identity structures of Islamists are a constructed perception of reality that can potentially change. This identity designs a social being that, in turn, determines diplomatic practices. The relationship with the world promoted by representatives of the Islamist ideology and the changes they wish to operate can therefore only be accurately understood through a range of analyses from different angles: that of their self-image (the self), that of their relationship with their environment and, finally, that of the difference they perceive between themselves and other units that form part of the international realm. Therefore, would it be possible to outline with a certain degree of precision and coherence the perception of the relationship to the global environment held by theorists of Political Islam? If that is the case, is it possible to uncover the underlying drivers of this perception? If they do exist, have these theological drivers been well understood and adequately put into practice by followers of Islamist movements? What lessons
can then be learnt in sociological terms of the translation of ideologies into practice and, more generally, on certain societies’ conceptions of international relations?
Genesis of the Islamist conception of International Relations

Most researchers agree on dating Islamism back to Hassan al-Banna’s (1906–1949) initiative in Egypt that had lent to the founding of the first Islamist mass movement. The movement had taken shape as a social institution, whose aim slowly shifted away from mere charity work to serving a political agenda. The latter’s aim was clear: calling the social body back to an “authentic” practice of Islam.

As stated in a famous text titled “To What Do We Call For?” found in within the Epistles (1936) of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood,

[our people, we call you with Quran in one hand, and Sunna in the other, and the acts of our Pious Ancestors to this Community are our ideals. We call you to Islam, to the teachings of Islam, to the precepts of Islam, and to the path of Islam. If this has to do with politics in your eyes, so this is politics, and if anyone is calling to these principles is something political, so we are the ones who are the most involved into politics.

Religion is intended to impose itself on all those that sincerely call themselves Muslims. This understanding consciously considers the national era as temporal, its end supposedly taking effect once the mass preaching like those carried out by the Muslim Brotherhood can convince the Umma. The international environment – more specifically the perception that forces are working against Islam – was central and co-constitutive of the emergence of Islamism as an ideology towards the end of the 1920s. The development of a conscious need for a political and symbolic structure to represent the Muslim world therefore cannot be understood without reference to the then quasi-total hegemony of Europe over the globe, as it was considered an absolute necessity for Muslims to be able to invert the relationship of domination favouring Europe. This goal was accomplished through the restitution of the original caliphate, an intellectual contribution taken from the writings of Hassan al-Banna.

Three different but interwoven underlying rationales are present in the original Islamist perception of the international arena. First, it is conceived as a challenging sphere where Muslim decline is the most visible and where sources of pride for Muslims have been absent. World War I had floored the Ottoman Empire and removed the caliphate. The latter were, until then, still perceived by many Muslims as the most substantial remnants of their expansionist and glorious past. Through the mirror held to them by international actors, first-generation Islamists fathom the extent of the tragic fate Islam had been experiencing for the past centuries. For them, current times represent a period of alienation. Second, if believers can find inspiration in the early ages of Islam, they would find a way to return creed to the forefront, and rebalance power towards their favour. First-generation Islamists thus compare themselves to the first generation of Muslims, with faith and an authentic understanding of their religion as their only weapons. Following their
line of thought, they view Muslim primacy over national borders as a reward. The historical evolution of Muslims is understood through the lens of religion – understood both as dogma and as a social practice. Therefore, assimilating such thought leads to the projection of oneself in a favourable light when confrontation arises. The dialectics that play out between Islamists and the rest of the world are born out of this point of view. The global sphere is the widest and most prestigious battle for which the Islamist project must prepare. Third, this explains why Islamists would avoid immediately constructing a political and religious entity engaging directly with the international relations realm. If the world is the goal, it is then more urgent for Islamists to consolidate the inferior levels of identification and activism before competing in an arena where the rivals of Islam are deemed the most problematic. In the eyes of Islamists, the global sphere therefore becomes somewhat of a truth test for Islam. The main goal and motivation of such movements are thus to defend Muslim identity and to bring glory to their religion in the realm of nation-states.

The written work of Hassan Al-Banna pales in comparison to the number of activist, educational, social and intellectual operations in which he had taken part. For this reason, he cannot be considered as a theorist of Islam. Being an advocate of a practice-based morality, he can be singled out as undertaking measures of social transformation that would shift the social order in a direction that complied to a stronger degree to his own understanding of religious norms. To be sure, his written works are, on a number of topics, more spiritual than political in content. However, more often than not, a reference to religion conceals a lack of clear political goals supporting his actions as well as the means to be used to achieve them. Instead, he depicts the ambitions and aspirations of the movement. Although he sometimes sketches out ways to realize the grand pan-Islamic project, his arguments appeal to morality and are seldom about laying out concrete plans. As such, he seeks more to inspire than to theorize. His success in uncovering alternative paths to his contemporaries relies for its most part on his charismatic authority. His point of view on the true place of Islam and the relationship it should have with the world – carried out by a supranational political entity – is, to a large extent, mechanical. The greatness of Islam is understood to result automatically from Muslim consciousness and from a project that would incite people to action. This project would aim at pushing forward the sacred norm in every aspect of social life (the family, the school, the state, labour unions, the media, the relationship to other religions, etc.). Moreover, Hassan al-Banna clearly links the future accomplishment of “Islamic civilization” to the parallel decline of the West, whose domination and achievements are said to soon collapse. Muslim spirituality will eventually triumph over those that have dominated over Muslim peoples until now. Hence, the founder of the Brotherhood is intrinsically a thinker of the Muslim world’s history. It is in his “Letter to the Young” that he is most explicit to express his curative intent to his religious community:

Most certainly, the Muslim Brotherhood’s programme follows several sequences, and each step is clear. We do know exactly what we are doing and we know how to realize our objectives.

1. We want a Muslim individual, in thought and faith, in morality and feelings, in his deeds and behaviour [...]
2. We want, then, a Muslim family, in thought and faith, in morality and feelings, in its work and behaviour [...] 
3. We want thereafter, a Muslim people [...] 
4. We desire, then, a Muslim government which will lead, through its people, the folk towards Islam’s guide, as have led before the Prophet’s companions – peace be upon Him – Abu Bakr and Omar. Henceforth we do not recognize any governmental organization that is not founded on Muslim principles, and who is not inspired by its principles. This is also why we do not recognize political parties, nor traditional figures with whom Islam’s naysayers and enemies have constrained us to govern and to support. We shall strive for the revival of an Islamic government, in all of its dimensions, and the establishment of an Islamic government built on the premises of this organization. 
5. We want, then, to bring together all members of this Islamic homeland, that Western politics have striven to drive apart, that European greed have led astray and imprisoned within delineated boundaries. We reject, for that matter, all international agreements that have transformed the Islamic homeland into a set of small powers, weak and torn apart, whose absorption will be facilitated for any of those tempted to usurp their rights. And we shall not remain silent on the deliberate and unjust obstruction made to these people’s liberties by third parties. Thus, Egypt, Syria, the Hijaz, Yemen, Tripolitania, Tunisia, Algeria, Marrakech and any land where a Muslim dwells [...], all of these form part of our homeland, that we shall endeavour to liberate, to break away from this grip, rescue from tyranny, and assemble from all of its separate parts [...] 
6. We want, thereafter, Islam’s flag to flap again, at full-mast blowing in the wind, in all lands that were fortunate once to welcome Islam, where the muezzin’s voice has rang our [...]. And misfortune has made it so that these lights have withdrawn from these countries and have plunged back into unbelief. And thus Andalusia, Sicily, the Balkans, the Italian coasts as well as the Mediterranean isles are all Mediterranean Muslim colonies, and they return to Islam’s cradle. The Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea must also become Muslim seas yet again, for they were such before, whether or not Mussolini wishes to rebuild the Roman Empire. This so-called old-style Empire was built only upon greed and passion. It is our incumbent right to rebuild the Islamic Empire, founded on justice and equality, and which has diffused this guiding light amongst the people. 
7. We desire, after this yet with it too, herald to the entire world our Islamic message, reach out to all people, scatter to all terrestrial horizons, and subdue tyrants [...] until there is no more disorder and that religion be entirely devoted to God [...].
Axiomatic principles of Islamists’ conception of their global environment

Although it appears difficult to precisely list the recurring assumptions of Islamists that act as pillars of their world visions, Islamists’ supporters, fully in line with Hassan al-Banna’s teachings, originally identify with five axiomatic principles. This was valid at least until the 1980s – a decade during which theoretical reflexivity was applied to this ideology. Although these structuring ideas have experienced numerous rewordings – even amendments – there are nevertheless resilient building blocks of a certain ethos.

First, Islam and its followers are oppressed. Political Islam was born as a function. In times when “unbelievers” violate moral and historical rights by not only managing their civilizational space but also the world’s corrupted affairs, it is the self-conscious believers’ task to give their faith – and the *Umma* – the means to counter and to act on the world, through reactive policies. The international system being delimited and structured according to cultural and religious logic, certain groups suffer ontologically from the “evil designs” of domineering powers, impersonated by the West. One of Islam’s self-acclaimed successes – the erection of a consolidated empire, as a forerunner to multiethnic endeavours, is *a posteriori* the reason why iniquitous actors have meddled with its religious and spiritual heritage. There would hence exist a plot against this heritage. The international rules of the game are thus based on power and deceit. Consequently, a realist grammar has developed within Islamist ideology since anarchy is at the heart of international relations. Differences in religious and cultural identity lead to political and perhaps military conflicts. As a reaction to the oppression that “Islam” (understood as a religion as well as a political nation deserving one single source of leadership), Islamism is seen as legitimate in its desire to reverse the world power struggles. However, the source of anarchy in this conception of international affairs does not necessarily stem from the desire to optimize the security inherent to the states within the international system. In this vision, states are unquestionably the main acting powers of international relations, but their foreign policies are first and foremost based on their cultural and religious identity (although they do not recognize it). Thus, the kind of anarchy that Islamists desire to react against has to do with identity and not the fact that every state within the international realm could act like any other one when its security is seen as threatened. The very *primus movens* of international relations deals with differences between cultures and religions and, more specifically, between “Islam” (seen as under threat because of the “un-Islamic Western imperialism”) and its enemies. States are units following an ideological matrix founded on religion, culture and, thereby, morality. Therefore, Muslim states have to unite so as to challenge a global power struggle that is said to be working at their detriment by giving birth to a new (actually old in the Islamist views) entity (the caliphate) which is supposedly the only one likely to rise to the global geopolitical challenge.
Second, this conception considers the “otherness,” a role impersonated first and foremost by the “West,” as commanding and operating against Islam’s principles and interests rather than providing humankind with alternative paths. Resentment for the “West” – a reified conception similar to what is considered as the “Muslim world” – underpins Islamists’ relation to that region, as it acts against Islam. A conspiracy might even be at stake, as understood in the context of the World War I, which was designed to destroy the Ottoman Empire, to ensure the creation of the state of Israel and pave the way for the colonization of “Islam’s territories.” This conspiracy lives on, as illustrated by general and ongoing prejudice against Muslim countries. Throughout these events, “the West” is aware of Islam’s potentially fatal rivalry, in particular, if Muslims were to unite as they choose. Muslims then have not been outperformed fairly and honestly.

Third, Muslims must unite, for they have been deceived by actors that are again deceiving them today. Divisions must end and Muslims must organize under the optimal configuration of the double-sided “Umma -caliphate.” The first element references to the sum of all those who recognize Islam as their religion. The second should be understood in a rather historical perspective. If nothing in Hassan al-Banna’s work describes in-depth what the “caliphate” means, it nonetheless considers any entity unifying all believers and exercising sovereignty vested in it by God to legislate and regulate social order. Thus, several forms of political organizations, at least in theory, may fall under the category of the caliphate (kingdoms, empires, modern states, etc.) as long as their allegiance to norms and values are made explicit.

Fourth, Islam is not only under attack because it competes for influence in other regions of the world – Islam is under threat for what it stands for. Conflict is, in a sense, cosmic – that is taking birth in transcending and meta-narratives. Muslims resist entities that they denounce not for what they are but what they do. In that respect, Muslims are not “looking for a fight.” They seek to re-establish the civilization’s scorned historical rights.

Fifth, and consequently, Political Islam’s defenders are to convocate and lead a revisionist agenda in international relations. They present the state as temporary. Then, assumed believers will realize the activist and doctrinal implications of their creed and complete their symbolic and political unification. This should then lead to a worldwide transformative project of the prejudiced and unjust international system. Islamism thus seeks to terminate existing power relations. For that reason, Islamist parties referring to this ideological grid can amend their foreign policies as see fit. For national interest that is to be built it must, before anything, be thought in relation to Islam and the Muslims.
Building a foreign policy discourse in “reverse shot”

Historical analyses of Islamist movements and parties, heirs to the Brotherhood matrix, have systematically centred on the Muslim nation’s fortune. The latter must face two adverse dimensions. First, putative Muslim regimes that do not defend it. Second, the international system itself and its prejudicial actors (the Western world and the Soviet empire during the Cold War, the former alone as of today) carry out the unstated objective of gaining control over the Islamist side. Such key ideas have endured the rise of Political Islam until the 1980s at the very least. At that time, in particular, young generations of Islamists – a significant number of which are under the influence of Sayyed Qutb’s revolutionary legacy – had already conducted violent actions back in the 1970s – thought of ways to engage in the national-political game in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Morocco and elsewhere. Although national politics were undeniably closed and devoted to reproducing autocratic forms of power, several student experiences – followed by others within trade unions – led Islamist leaders to revise their understanding of the struggle to come, and to put the religious norm at centre stage of the socio-political organization. To this, one must add that these movements’ theorists and leaders were forced into exile – after condemnation in their home country – mostly to Europe. The experience of exile was to be relevant to the major developments that were then to take place.

With regards to foreign policy, the antagonistic relation to the West and the critique of regimes governing Muslim-majoritarian countries remain present, although attenuated with respect to alternative revolutionary readings of Hassan al-Banna’s work. Islamist principles are reformulated – though no Political Islam Bad Godesberg\textsuperscript{13} is observable as evident after the Second World War. New circumstances have played a huge role in the ideological reformation of some European communist parties (starting with the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) that turned down the Marxist legacy and introduced new sources of morality such as Christian ethics, classical philosophy and humanism). International issues traditionally structuring their international political agenda – Palestine first and foremost – are systematically related to the religious dimension.

The construction of world-related representations is aligned with civilizational thinking, according to which Muslims are oppressed because of what they are. Nevertheless, the Islamic toolkit is not exclusive. Theorists such as Rached Ghannouchi (Ennahda) and Mahfoud Nahnah (Algerian Hamas) have changed Islamist perspectives on international relations by incorporating into the Islamist matrix a democratic one. From this, emerged conceptions of foreign policies based on cooperation, under the condition that Western powers abandon deceptive moves to offer diplomatic solutions to crises, tensions and conflicts characterizing the Muslim world and its relations with other parts of the world. Even if Islamists are inherently suspicious, some are still able to conceive of a positive-sum game through which appeased relations would be attained with the West.
International legal norms, the multilateral agenda or the fundamental human rights applied to Muslim populations are all items that Islamists mobilize to suggest an ongoing process of doctrinal adjustments and conversion to democratic values. Interestingly, the emergence of violent and revolutionary radical forms of Islamism since the Afghan war (the “Jihadist” tendency) enables these then “moderate” and “reasonable” actors to appear as partners for world powers. Indeed, disregarding their claims could then lead to more opposition and violence from and within the Muslim world.
Experiencing power: a political isomorphism?

Revolutionary dynamics at work in the Arab world since 2010, notably incarnated by representatives of Political Islam’s coming to office, provides the observer with an interesting sequence – though short-lived – to measure Political Islam’s workability and capacity for evolving within the realm of foreign policy. From the original premises to the contemporary era, supporters of an activist and politically organized Islam have realized the necessary translation of their offer into national frameworks – their successes being first and foremost the result of internal considerations. This implies that references to the international climate are not decisive to explain mobilizations around Islamism – though references to oppressed and victimized Muslims under an unfair system are still present in its discourses so far.

Different election outcomes resulting from the political transitions that took place in some Arab countries since 2010 confirm this state of affairs. From a constructivist perspective, Tunisia is a case in point. If Ennahda were to come to power, its discourses on foreign policy could then be interpreted in either two ways. On one hand, the declarations of this party’s representative strongly insist on their commitment to democratic principles and their wish to protect and strengthen the gains of the revolution. In turn, these statements have a strong international outreach as they tend to reassure other states and international organizations at a time when the country experiences important social and economic problems. On the other hand, although quite rare, the party’s appeal to the need for the Muslim identity to grow stronger under the banner of Political Islam aims at showing to some electoral segments that this objective will not vanish into thin air. If it is – at all – possible to differentiate an actor’s intentions from the strategy it lays out, a phenomenon of isomorphism is undeniably at play here. The norm that is appealed to, however, does not belong to the usual ideological realm of Islamist parties. In this case, the legal channels, as well as the institutional or social pressures, have put constraints on the form and social practices of the party. The longing for democracy and legal order uncovered by the Tunisian revolution have compelled the Islamist sphere to rethink its relationship to the world within a pluralist framework. The paradigm shift that led to the political transition in Tunisia has forced Islamists to reposition themselves in the new political arena. In order to uphold and promote their worldview, they must respect the modus operandi of their new field of action. The same kind of phenomena can be observed at the level of activists, the only difference being that it is rather their biographical trajectories that explain the reflexiveness of the structure’s tie to the wider world. Different profiles under study show that forced exile in the 1990s because of the Ben Ali regime, added to the experience of migration, have completely transformed these actors’ perception of the international distribution of power and inequality. These experiences have led them to see the “West” as a complex and non-essentialized actor. Indeed, a great number of activists explain that the interaction they had with some parts of foreign civil societies as well as their political socialization through human rights forums, have led them to believe that the main
source of deadlock in Arab and Muslim countries was internal – the autocratic and despotic natures of the regimes in place. Their perception of the world’s summa divisio is not anymore necessarily that of “Muslims” against “non-Muslims.” In fact, the emergence of a moderate Islamist discourse and practice of foreign policy must be understood as a dynamic rather than a permanent condition. The remaining symbolically charged issues – such as the Palestinian cause – and the persistent ambition to withdraw the “Islamic nation” from any pagan civilizational influence keep the anti-Western rhetoric going. However, the discourse on the West is more focused on its “hypocrisy” since it brands universal values of “Muslims” when a discord appears while Western countries merrily disrespect them. In this respect, the evolution of Ennahda’s programmatic documents shows how far Islamist parties have come in the transformation of the “Islamist perception of the world.” For example, Ennahda’s objective among other main political orientations was to

[r]estore Tunisia’s place as the basis of the Islamic civilization in order to put an end to the latter’s alienation and bewilderment by promoting Tunisia’s Islamic personality. Renew Islamic thought in the light of the founding principles of Islam by taking into account the requirements of progress while getting rid of the remains of times of decadence and the influence of the West.  

By now, the construction of a new Islamist identity disregards modes of allegiance should they be, for example, national or religious. Indifference also implies means required to achieve worldwide Muslim solidarity. Indeed, although this objective is not dropped, Islamist parties focus more on its symbolic dimension. These ideological realignments have a clear impact on foreign policy discourses. The 9th Congress of Ennahda, held in 2012, uses a very different tone when it comes to the international agenda than in the 1980s.  

The construction of a new Islamist identity which acknowledges the plurality of customs of allegiance (both national and religious), on one hand; and the possibility of enhancing Muslim solidarity on a global scale (according to modalities yet to be defined, as unification first starts with at the symbolic level), on the other, has clear implications on foreign policy discourses. As displayed in the work of the movement’s 12th Congress held in 2012, the tone adopted with respect to the international relations’ agenda has evolved significantly:

Contributing to the establishment of a foreign policy based on the principle of states’ sovereignty, unity and independence vis-à-vis any power, establishing international relations supported by mutual respect, cooperation, justice, equality and peoples’ right to self-determination; and act to support weakened peoples and their just cases, among which the Palestinian cause is the first priority.
Islamism in the long term: a religious version of a structural social request. Of the importance of conditions for its integration in the national and international environments

The non-exhaustive study of the foundations and origins of Islamist actors’ visions of the world brings to light two key elements.

The first concerns the revisionist potential that iterations of this ideology might unleash. Because it can be read radically, and because it conceptualizes a specific relation to the “other” as well as to the global environment, the Islamist ideology can be potentially “deviant.” This holds true, in particular, if one has a “realist” interpretation of the world in which units of the international system are supposed to behave in predictable ways according to logic of power. There is, in addition, a more structural explanation to Islamist-prone leaders’ attraction to more rigid forms of diplomacy. Indeed, once one puts aside Islamism’s views on international relations and the religious mind-set of its actors, one can identify recurrent thematic patterns within the rhetoric of countless movements in the Muslim world. This is particularly true for Arab nationalists, who target a Western stance that is said to be “imperialist” and aggressive towards formerly colonized populations; added to violent criticisms against pro-Israeli stands, both aspects present political issues that are not exclusively those of Political Islam. If its representatives’ current success is not attributable to their foreign policy agenda (if such an agenda is indeed identifiable), one still has to acknowledge the strong resemblance with historically influential ideas in wide segments of the political spectrum that are still present in some Arab and Muslim societies. The cultural and religious side to an intellectual structure stemming from populations’ sense of oppression, Islamism impersonates – in sacred guise – aspirations for change in the international system. Such change should be in favour of peoples and states that too often perceive themselves as “tricked” in world affairs. This would then not fall under an explanation that has little do with Islamism’s bases as presented by its leaders and activists: the inclination towards independence and politico-religious unity.10

However, ideology can evolve. In the case of Islamism, this occurs both because of sociological changes that have operated within Islamists’ ranks for the past decades, and as well as their accession to power, which had little to do with geo-politics. Certain Islamists’ reflexivity, added to the high costs imposed by the international order on any desire to remain loyal to their theoretical and moral assumptions, have led the Islamist ideology to evolve. This does not mean that final amendments have been brought to Islamism. However, where Islamists have had a diplomatic practice, and where such a practice could have evolved, one observes that they have not attempted to change the rules of the game. If discourses have systematically alluded to the
necessary unification of the Muslim peoples and defence of fellow believers, one can hardly see here more than a symbolic horizon. In short, these are evident signals sent by Political Islam testifying to its uniqueness, when, in fact, it has been normalized when in touch with power.

The task of envisaging possible and future evolutions of this originally radical and revisionist offer however still remains. We can imagine the coming of an all-amended Islamism. A Bad Godesberg for Political Islam is possible according to contemporary theorists, whose main interest lies in coping with societies’ diversities while rooting in it their religious legacy. That which is neither a centralized nor homogeneous movement should only concern part of the Islamist spectrum. Moreover, a clear-cut break from the past would unlikely find a formalized form. The daily decision-making of a “normalized” Islamism within states’ internal political games makes the case for Islamism’s ideological evolution without a magnified critical juncture.

One can also single out the thread of the “Islamo-national” synthesis, which would go hand-in-hand with strong dogmatic specificities yet which would try to express itself within democratized political spaces or within platforms ruled by powers aware of the impossibility to repress Islamism’s supporters. Ideal types of breaking away from “traitor” regimes and supranational endeavours would endure. This, however, would introduce a more cooperative agenda through which working for religion’s benefit in a given country would be considered a step forward in the direction of a global plan. Discourses could still then mention the “caliphate” or a “Union of Muslim States” based on the European model. Fundamentally, Political Islam’s revisionist stance would not disappear – and the wider horizon of Islamism’s project would remain the transformation of political representation in Muslim-majoritarian spaces.

Last, one cannot exclude the possible reshaping of this “ideology on offer” in countries where recent events seem to have rejected it under the pressure of counter-revolutionary forces (e.g. Egypt) – in ways more radical than past trends would’ve suggested. This may appear as an unlikely outcome given that Islamists have taken note of the high social expectations raised in these countries. Nonetheless, because each grave crisis contains the seeds for actors’ radicalization – one can also expect some Islamist senior members and activists to be supported in their views that regimes to which they are opposed cannot be defeated by the bearers of religious genuineness. In a constructivist approach to the global space, such phenomena can only occur if a radicalized social identity impacts the international practice and conception of a political movement. More than ever, and for all these reasons, final conclusions on Islamism cannot be provided today.
Notes


2 We are here principally referring to the Muslim activists and militants seeking to establish an Islamic political, social and identity order based (at least originally) on a fundamentalist understanding of religion, by using the modern tools of politicization (creation of a political party to run for power, use of modern media, etc.). We are thus interested in movements such as Ennahda in Tunisia, the Justice and Development Party in Morocco, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. In doing so, we do not engage any discussion on the “Jihadist” movements whose politicization does not involve a “classical” politicization at the profit of a transnational insurrection.


5 Indeed, the army’s coup in Egypt in July 2013 against the Islamist government in order to re-establish the army’s predominance over national affairs shows that Islamism may well also be overthrown.


7 “People do use the language […] to influence other people. Thus, no matter they are aware of it or not, their representation of the world contributes to its construction,” Kubalkova, V. (ed.). (2001). Foreign Policy in a Constructed World, Armonk, p. 63.


13 The Bad Godesberg has represented the party programme outline of the political course of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) of Germany. It was ratified on November 15, 1959, at an SPD party convention in the town of Bad Godesberg (which is today a part of Bonn). It rejected the goal of replacing capitalism and abandoned Marxist theories of materialism and class struggle. For in-depth study see Orlow, D. (2016) A History of Modern Germany: 1871 to Present, Routledge.

Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields.” American Sociological Review 48, no. 2: 147–160. Isomorphism takes place when an actor tries to redefine itself through action or discourse by appealing to a common social norm.

15 It is important to note here that social change – that is the revolutionary and transitional processes – act as "social facts" as understood by Emile Durkheim. The latter explains that social facts are “[a] social fact is any way of acting, whether fixed or not, capable of exerting over the individual an external constraint; which is general over the whole of a given society whilst having an existence of its own, independent of its individual manifestations.” (chapter 1), Durkheim, E. (1982). The Rules of Sociological Method. New York: Free Press, 50–59.


17 The Movement of the Islamic Tendency, Constitutive platform, June 1981.


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The geopolitics of the Wahhabi movement

From the “neglected duty” to Daesh

Deina Abdelkader

Amidst the conflicts that arose because of ISIS in the Middle East, one has to question how such a movement is organized, what are its goals, but more important, where do its ideology and thus its legitimacy stem from? ISIS’s ideological lineage is important because it lays the foundation for further research that ties repression with extremism. There are four ideological stages that Wahhabism has gone through: from the politicization of its original ideology under Muhammed Ibn AbdelWahab till modern times. This politicization has led to the current radicalization in such groups as al-Qaeda and ISIS. This chapter examines the different stages of ideological transformation Wahhabism has gone through. The chapter starts from an individual level of radicalization exemplified by Abdel Salam Faraj¹ and then engages in an international level analysis of Wahhabi transnationalism, examining the movement’s foundation and its developments.
The case of Abdel Salam Faraj and the neglected duty

Islamic fundamentalism is a term that was used by the media after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The contemporary reference post 9/11 has changed the language about Islamic political activism under the rubric of terrorism. In this mood of generalization, we are losing sense analytically of what John Esposito has referred to as the “quiet revolution.” The changes that are taking place in many Muslim countries are not the ones we usually see on television or read about in the newspapers.

In an effort to discern the quiet revolution from terrorism, it is necessary to start by providing a definition of the term *jihad*. The speed and strength of cultural change in Muslim countries cannot be limited to a certain movement and its political expediency anymore. Therefore, it is important analytically to focus on the populist sentiments towards the word *jihad* among Muslims.

In *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, *jihad* is defined as follows: “holy war, a Divine institution of warfare to extend Islam into the abode of struggle, or to defend Islam from danger” (Glasse, 1989: 209–210). Netton defines jihad as a “holy war”; he writes that “the word derives from an Arabic root meaning basically to ‘strive’” and that “all Muslims are obliged to wage a spiritual jihad in the sense of striving against sin and sinful inclinations within themselves: this is the other major sense of jihad” (Netton, 1992: 136–137). The differences between those two definitions precisely point out the issues addressed in this research: Is jihad synonymous with “holy war,” or does jihad portray a broader concept that befits the general ethos of Islam?

In response to this question, an analysis of a violent Islamic activist will aid the understanding of the word. Faraj added jihad as the sixth pillar of Islam (the other five being (1) *al-shahada*, professing one’s beliefs that there is One God and that Muhammad is his prophet; (2) praying five times a day; (3) fasting during the month of Ramadan; (4) *zakat*, almsgiving; and (5) *al-hajj*, going on a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime).

First, Faraj views his jihad as the true jihad. He comments on other non-violent Muslim activists:

Some of the Muslim activists say that the right road to the establishment of an Islamic state is the non-violent call (*da’wa*), and the creation of a broad popular base. This does not bring about the foundation of an Islamic state. Nevertheless, some people make this point the basis for their withdrawal from true jihad.

(Jansen, 1986: 185)

Faraj further illustrates his point by citing the Quran: “Few among my servants are thankful” (34.13).

Faraj differentiates between what he calls true jihad and by implication any other type of jihad, which by implication would be false. He does not make references to the Quran or the Hadith (the Prophet’s sayings): the two most important primary sources that guide all Muslims regardless of
their creed. He further emphasizes this when he writes,

Some people have misunderstood what I say and have taken it to mean that we should refrain from the nonviolent call to Islam altogether. This however is the refutation of those who see it as their aim to create a broad base and in doing so forget about true jihad, or even hinder or obstruct true jihad in order to realize this peaceful aim of theirs.

(Jansen, 1986: 187)

Second, even when he cites the Quran to prove that only a select few, “a minority” will be on the straight path, he fails to cite the whole verse:

They (in reference to the Sons of David) worked for him. As he desired, making arches, images, basins, as large as reservoirs, and cooking caldrons fixed in their places: “Work ye Sons of David, with thanks! But few of my servants are grateful.”

(34.13)

Therefore, when Faraj takes only part of the verse he totally disregards the context and the story behind the verse; that is the depiction of a minority that follows the straight path whereby they will save the rest of the believers is not presented in this specific verse.

Again differentiating “true” from “false” jihad, Faraj stresses that

[w]hoever frankly admits that he has no knowledge of the way in which Islam regulates jihad must know that the regulations of Islam are simple and easy for someone who sincerely dedicates his intentions to God. Such a person must consciously formulate the inner intention of fighting for God’s cause and from that moment the regulations of jihad can easily and simply be studied, and in a very, very short timeThe matter then has no need for much study. When someone wants to increase his knowledge above this elementary level he can freely do so, but to postpone jihad for the sake of the quest for knowledge is the line reasoning of someone who has no case worth considering.

(Jansen, 1986: 189)

There are two verses of the Quran that Faraj repeatedly cites to support his argument:

1. The verse of the Sword: “The abrogation of the command to be at peace with the infidels, to forgive them, to be passively exposed to them and to endure their insults preceded here the command to fight them.” Such a command to live in peace with the infidels is found in 114 verses in 54 Surahs. This is all abrogated by the verse of the Sword (9.5). Faraj continues to write: “It is strange indeed that there are those who want to conclude from Quranic verses that have been abrogated that fighting and jihad are to be forsworn.”

(Jansen, 1986: 195)

2. The second verse that Faraj repeatedly cites is Surah 2, verse 216. He argues: “Fighting is a duty upon all Muslims.” When God made fasting obligatory, he said: “Fasting is prescribed for you” (2.183). In regard to fighting the Quran says: “Fighting is prescribed to you” (2.216). The real character of this duty is clearly spelled out in the Quranic texts:
it is fighting, which means confrontation and blood.

(Jansen, 1986: 199)

It is necessary to refer to the verses Faraj utilizes to build his argument for jihad in order to check the meaning and the context of those verses. First, the verse of the Sword, is preceded by the following one:

But the treaties are not dissolved with those pagans with whom Ye have entered into alliance and who have not subsequently failed you in aught, nor aided any one against you. So fulfill your engagements with them to the end of their term: for God loveth the righteous

(9.4)

But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans whenever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem of war; But if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them: for God is oft-forgiving, Most Merciful

(9.5)

The reason that the preceding two verses are mentioned is that they clearly state that “[a]nd who (in reference to the people Muslims have entered into a treaty with) have not subsequently failed you in aught, nor aided any one against you” (9.4); that is if and only when the people you have a treaty with break their promise or aid others against the Muslims by means of treachery do Muslims resort to fighting; “when the forbidden months are past” and even then if the enemy shows signs of repentance, the Muslims should forgive them and make peace with them.

The second verse that Faraj utilizes is in Surah 2:

Fighting is prescribed to you, and ye dislike it. But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye love a thing which is bad for you. But God knoweth, and ye know not.

(2.216)

The verse that follows, however, is not mentioned by Faraj:

Those who believed and those who suffered exile and fought and strove and struggled in the path of God, they have the hope of the Mercy of God; and God is oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

(2.218)

The verses therefore are addressed to the community of believers who were forced into exile from Mecca to Medina, and any other communities that are exiled or persecuted because of their beliefs. Therefore, the summon to fight is in the context of exile and persecution. Faraj intentionally manipulates the text to justify his deeds.
Qutb and Jihad

Qutb is another example of an Islamic activist who wrote many books during his lifetime. He is one of the main ideologues of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and his works are widely read in the Muslim world in Arabic and in translation. Qutb starts his argument about jihad by denying that Islam calls on Muslims to force others to believe; he cites the Quran: “Let there be no compulsion in religion: truth stands out clear from error: whoever rejects evil and believes in God hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And God heareth and knoweth all things” (2.256), that is the idea of coercing infidels, according to Qutb, abrogates the essence of religion (Qutb, 1967: 130).

Qutb clarifies that Islam, as a “world idea,” should aid in eradicating all forms of injustice (zulm), regardless of the peoples, country, religion or colour of skin: human beings should be salvaged from the destruction of their fellow men. It is in this context that Muslims should rise to jihad (Qutb, 1967: 131–132). He further stresses that Islam promotes peaceful coexistence when he cites the Quran:

O mankind! We created you from a single pair of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other) Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you and God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).

(49.13)

Another verse from the Quran supports Qutb’s position on peaceful coexistence:

And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better than mere disputation, unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong and injury, but say, we believe in revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you, our God and your God is One, and it is to Him that we all bow in submission.

(29.46)

Qutb explains the limitations of engaging in warfare even with polytheists who do not believe any of the three heavenly religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Qutb, 1967: 134). Two verses in the Quran specifically address the limitations of engaging in warfare:

God forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for your faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them, for God loveth those who are just. God only forbids you with regards to those who fight you for your faith, and drive you out of your homes, and support others in driving you out, from turning to them for friendship and protection

(60:8–9)

Although many consider Faraj and Qutb as Islamic activists, and some would argue that they are both violent, yet, as exemplified in his writing, Qutb is not in agreement with Faraj’s
interpretation of jihad.
The meaning of jihad in contemporary Muslim societies

In summation of the presented arguments, there remains one verse of the Quran which clarifies the causes for any warfare:

To those against whom War is made, permission is given to fight, because they are wronged; and verily God is Most Powerful in their aid. Those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right, for no cause except that they say “Our Lord is God.” Did not God check one group of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure. God will certainly aid those who aid His cause: for verily God is Full of Strength, Exalted in Might, able to enforce His Will

(22.39–22.40)

The verse clearly states that only in conditions of outright warfare should people defend themselves by fighting. The second verse also points out an important issue because it clearly equates the “People of the Book” (Jews and Christians) to Muslims in terms of (1) their right to fight against people who threaten their freedom of belief and (2) the protection by God against those who would “pull down monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques.”

The reflex to resort to violence is what Faraj was advocating in his book. However, if we take a look at what is happening currently in Egypt – fighting with the Egyptian Copts and burning their places of worship – the justification that Faraj offered for Sadat’s assassination is used by few as a way to justify their ill deeds. It is therefore important to stress that the legal interpretation of the text depends on a holistic approach, an approach that analyses all the textual sources and does not rely on broken verses from the Quran just to serve its purpose.

Negotiation and conflict management rely heavily on deciphering the relevance of context and that is why when one analyses the texts in the Islamic tradition, one is more capable of understanding whether the faith and its followers are inherently violent. The fact of the matter is that Faraj, first and foremost, selectively quotes the Quran, a primary source in Islam, to justify his ideas; second, he utilizes secondary sources more than primary ones in his argument to legitimize the use of violence.

Faraj, like others who seek violence as an answer, relies on the work and interpretation of Ibn Taymiya, a scholar who wrote about jihad in the face of the Mongol invasion of Syria and other Muslim territories. Ibn Taymiya argued fiercely for the use of force because the Syrians were fleeing and leaving their land and belongings behind. So, in an effort to hold their positions and fight against the invasion, Ibn Taymiya wrote assertively about combat and its necessity. Currently, Ibn Taymiya’s work is considered to be one of the main sources that incite warfare. On examining the “Doctrine of Jihad” by Ibn Taymiya (Peters, 1996: 43–54), we see that he uses Quranic verses the same way that Faraj did; that is the verses either are irrelevant to the argument being made (waging violence/war) or are truncated to cater and serve the argument for
war. Moreover, Ibn Taymiya utilizes secondary sources in his essay about jihad, which is the same method that Faraj follows in his writing as indicated earlier.

On the other hand, if one examines a more contemporary essay by Mahmud Shaltut, one will find that he argues from a different perspective in his analysis of primary sources on the issue of jihad. Shaltut, who focused on finding commonalities between the Muslim sects, was especially interested in bringing the Shiites and Sunnis closer. Shaltut not only recognized the importance of citing the Quranic verses in their entirety but adhered vehemently to the idea that to understand what the Quran has to say about a topic, one needs to analyse all the verses connected to this topic in the whole book. Shaltut emphasized that contextualization is necessary to build any argument or opinion based on and derived from the Quran. Shaltut built on Mohamed Abdu’s liberal thoughts, but he specifically called for the analysis of the text from a liberal holistic point of view. This latter point is clear when he compares the “fighting verses” with the “forgiveness verses”; that is he emphasizes the balance between the need to defend oneself by engaging in war and the need to forgive. Shaltut stresses the importance of unity in the face of differences, he was concerned with bringing different sects together and, therefore, he stressed unity as a priority rather than divisions in Muslim societies.

Therefore, based on the writings of Qutb, Boisard and Shaltut, it is evident that jihad is only a means of self-defense and that instigating violence according to their interpretations is abhorred by the faith. The spirit of the law and text (the Quran) guide those authors’ idea of jihad.

According to Shaltut’s commentary on some of the Quranic verses,

\[\text{in these verses and the principle they contain with regard to the reason and the aim of fighting, there is not a single trace to be found of any idea of conversion by force. On the contrary, these verses, like the previous ones, say in plain and distinct words that the reason for which the Muslims have been ordered to fight is the aggression directed against the, expulsion from their dwellings, violation of God’s sacred institutions and attempts to persecute people for what they believe.}\]

(Peters, 1996: 75)

The writers examined exemplify on an individual level how Jihad is interpreted in Islam: the chapter now turns its focus to the transnational movement: Wahhabism.

Wahhabism, as the chapter further explains, did not start out as a jihadi ideology, but it was utilized as a nationalist-defensive movement by Mohamed Ibn Saud against the Ottoman Empire.
The transnational Wahhabi movement

Introduction. Mohamed Ibn Abdel Wahhab and Wahhabism: Ideological components of Wahhabism

It is important to note that Wahhabism came as a reaction to Ottoman rule in the 1700s (Hourani, 1983). The message of its founder, Muhammad Ibn Abdel Wahhab, was focused on monotheism (tawhid). In the midst of foreign and superstitious trends, he found it necessary to form the faith by adhering to its basic tenet, which is also how he described his movement and his followers: the Monotheists (al-Muwahideen; Delong-Bas, 2004: 9).

He also focused on the study of the Prophet’s sayings (plural: ahadeeth). Ibn Abdel Wahhab studied the context of the hadith rather than its chain of transmission which was a common practice at the time. The importance of primary sources to him was an essential feature of his reform and therefore opposed to the idea that Wahhabis are Hanbalis and therefore the most literalist interpretation of the faith. Ibn Abdel Wahhab was a reformist who sought to open the door to the interpretation of the textual sources and to avoid relying on secondary legal sources. Ibn Abdel Wahhab was a purist who thought that over time, Islamic legal interpretations were competing with the textual sources in Islamic legal thought. As Delong-Bas clearly states,

[h]e called for the sociomoral reconstruction of his society through greater adherence to monotheism (tawhid) and renewed attention to the Quran and hadith. He rejected imitation of the past (taqlid) in favor of fresh and direct interpretation (ijtihad) of the scriptures and Islamic law by contextualizing them and studying their content. He was a religious scholar. He established a protective relationship with a local political leader, who agreed to implement his religious teachings.

(Delong-Bas, 2004: 13)

Ibn Abdel Wahhab was fighting what, over time, was eroding the Muslim faith, that is the utter reliance on religious scholars by the people, idolizing their opinion and placing their interpretations on an equal footing with the texts. Thus, the religious scholar’s popularity gained power, although the faith itself is not hierarchical and is not institutionalized as is Catholicism, for example.

A second characteristic that plagues the literature that does not distinguish Wahhabis from Salafism is Wahhab’s condemning of violence. It is evident from Ibn Abdel Wahhab’s writing that he thought that fighting is a last resort to conflict resolution. It was common in Ibn Abdel Wahhab’s time for religious scholars to declare a person or group of people as non-believer(s) (kafir), if this person went against their will. This entailed not only losing credibility in a Muslim society but also subjected the person/group to war. In opposition to such teachings, he argued that there are principles in Islamic legal thought that clearly state how people could hold different
opinions and the rules of differing (*adab al-ikhtilaf*). He wrote that any such attempts by the religious scholars are just to expand their own power and that Islam had nothing to do with alleging that other people are non-believers. Ibn Abdel Wahhab stated that calling others to Islam should basically rely on education and debate, not fighting. As a religious leader, after his alliance with Mohamed Ibn Sa’ud in 1744, Ibn Abdel Wahhab’s main tension in this alliance was to distance himself from Ibn Saud’s militaristic ambitions. (Delong-Bas, 2004: 32–33)

Ibn Abdel Wahhab thought that: “Jihad was not intended to serve as a means of acquiring power, wealth, or glory.” (Delong-Bas, 2004: 35)

However, as early as 1749, some of Ibn Abdel Wahhab’s followers assassinated a Saudi leader, Ibn Mu’ammar, because he was a detractor of Ibn Saud’s newly founded state. Delong-Bas asserts that “Ibn Abdel Wahhab’s goal of reforming Islam was overshadowed and ultimately overwhelmed by Muhammad Ibn Saud’s quest for state consolidation” (Delong-Bas, 2004: 38).

However, it is arguable that Ibn Abdel Wahhab’s message incited violence from its inception as early as 1749. Delong-Bas argues that if a Jihadi continuum were to be created that Ibn Abdel Wahhab’s writing would fall between classicists and modernists:

Clearly, although Ibn Abdel Wahhab shares some similarities with modernists in terms of content and approach, particularly with respect to the goal of establishing treaty relationships with non-Muslims rather than engaging them in warfare and in emphasizing education and verbal debate as the major means of the modern-ists in the face of European colonialism. In terms of content, he is closer to the modernists than he was to the classicists, but he does not fit neatly into either category (Delong-Bas, 2004: 239).

**The Wahhabis and Ibn Sa’ud’s political interests: the second wave**

After Ibn Abdel Wahhab died in 1791 or 1792. (Delong-Bas, 2004: 40) Ibn Sa’ud’s political agenda expressed itself more clearly. Thus, with the death of Ibn Abdel Wahhab, it was easier to manipulate Wahhabi followers and scholars. The Wahhabi scholars started politicizing certain jurisprudential writings to justify their rebellion against the Ottoman Empire. By politicizing, here I mean taking words and ideas out of context to reach a political goal. The Wahhabi scholars started taking parts of Ibn Taymiya’s message about jihad in order to religiously justify their discontent with their Ottoman leaders. It is at this point that Wahhabi doctrine was and continues to be influenced by Ibn Taymiya’s work: “Ibn Taymiya provided a world view and ideology that allowed for revolution against an unfaithful ruler by denying him his status as a Muslim on the basis of his failure to fulfill his responsibilities to Islam” (Delong-Bas, 2004: 247). Again, like Ibn Abdel Wahhab, Ibn Taymiya did not incite violence, but he witnessed the Mongol invasion of Syria and repeated attacks by the Crusaders. Ibn Taymiya’s fervour for advocating armed attack was contextual because of the attacks by the Mongols and Crusaders, it was defensive in nature. However, taken out of context, his writing about the mutually exclusive spheres between the land of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*) and the land of non-believers (*Dar al-Kufr*), led many Wahhabis and other violent offshoots in the Muslim world to use those texts to legitimize their own violence (Delong-
Thus, although Wahhabism started out with Ibn Abdel Wahhab’s focus on the difference between the imitation of jurisprudential thought and the interpretation of primary sources, that is texts (Taqlid versus Ijtihad), the followers of Ibn Abdel Wahhab ended up imitating Ibn Taymiya in their call for a holy war against the Ottomans in the early 19th century.

The third wave: the evolution of Wahhabi thought and the Sahwa movement in modern history

As a direct result of Abdel Nasser’s violent persecution of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, some of the Muslim Brothers migrated to Saudi Arabia in the 1960s (Lacroix, 2011: 51). Abdel Nasser, like any totalitarian leader, wished to crush the most powerful opposition in Egypt because of his personal goal of ruling the country. Although the Muslim Brothers were supportive of the 1952 coup and its leaders (Nasser was one of those leaders), he turned against them in 1953 before the attempt to assassinate him in 1954 (Mitchell, 1993). It is also documented that Nasser concurred that he was a Muslim Brother before the 1952 coup in a police investigation (Mitchell, 1993). However, because of the breakdown and heightened political tension in Egypt towards the late 1950s and into the early 1960s, because Egypt was still under British rule, the rise of Nationalists/Leftists, the divide from within the Muslim Brotherhood: all those tensions led to the secret apparatus’s (the armed wing of the Muslim Brothers in the 1950s) attempt on Nasser’s life in what was famously known as the “Manshiya” accident (Mitchell, 1993).

The Sahwa movement was then created on the basis of Wahhabism (which as previously mentioned was affected by Ibn Taymiya’s thought in its second wave) and the new immigrant Muslim Brotherhood thought, as I will clarify. Among the intellectual “fathers” of the new movement was Mohamed Qutb, the brother of the well-renowned Sayid Qutb, who was sentenced to death by Abdel Nasser in 1966. Muhamed Qutb was released from prison in 1971, after being tortured for six years without due process or the observance of basic human rights. After his release he travelled to Saudi Arabia where he was hired as a professor to teach Islamic law (Lacroix, 2011: 53).

Muhamed Qutb wrote,

There is no difference between the question of creed and the question of shari’a: either there is government according to God’s revelations (al-hukm bima anzala Allah), or jahiliyya and shirk (the association of God with other entities). For the knowledge of the Truth of God and just belief in Him imply granting sovereignty (hakimiyya) only to Him as they imply directing adoration (uluhiyya) only to Him... “Aqida (creed) and shari’a are the two sides of a single question; they emanate from a single source and lead to a single end. This source and this end are belief in God and submission (Islam) to him.”

(Lacroix, 2011: 54)

In the process of making the ideological links to Wahhabism, Qutb and his experience in prison, as well as the death of his brother, created the persona and the anger expressed in his
ideological work: in addition to making himself the leading theorist of the Wahhabi–Qutbist hybrid, Muhammed Qutb tried to mask those elements of his brother’s legacy that were incompatible with the political and religious environment of his adopted country. In particular, that involved sweeping Sayid’s very first works under the rug, such as Artistic Representation in the Koran (1945), whose references to art and music were considered incompatible with Wahhabi norms, and, especially, Social Justice in Islam (1949), whose arguments laid the groundwork for the theory of Islamic socialism, which was later given real substance by the Syrian Brother Mustafa al-Siba’i in The Socialism of Islam. In the Saudi political context of the 1970s, such leftist positions had obviously become untenable in the face of a government that claimed itself the champion of conservative Islam (Lacroix, 2011: 54–55).

The second man who was part of the religious revival (al-Sahwa) was Abdel al-Rahman al-Dawsani who was from Najd, he espoused Qutb’s ideas and became “the first sheikh to attack untiringly the deviations of Saudi liberals among the intelligentsia and in the nascent intellectual field” (Lacroix, 2011: 58).

The third well-known person in the religious awakening movement was Muhammed al Rashid or Abd al-Mun’im: he was of Iraqi origin and a former member of the Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood before moving to Saudi Arabia. Al-Rashid was known for presenting the Wahhabi ideas in writing and combining Qutbist, Wahhabist, Ibn Taymiya and other ideas to form the ideological cornerstone of the revivalist (Sahwa) movement (Lacroix, 2011: 59–60).

One of the main characteristics that were later on imitated by all Salafist movements is their sanctification of everyday life, they

adopted a very strict code of conduct that they considered an emanation of the Islamic norm. In the process they borrowed widely from the practices of Wahhabi ulema, but although these practices had hitherto been the preserve of a small religious elite, the Sahwa made them a model applicable to everyone.

(Lacroix, 2011: 60)

Although the Saudi royal family, King Abdel Aziz and King Faysal, were welcoming of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s, they clearly did not want the Brotherhood to establish a branch of the movement. They were, however, allowed to help their brethren financially (Lacroix, 2011: 64). However, the Saudis who were in touch with the Muslim Brotherhood later on developed movements that collectively are known as “The Awakening/Revival” (Sahwa). The leaders of those groups were in touch with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, but they never formed a united front. The revivalists of Saudi Arabia became united only when they had political competition from a group called the Sururis established by an originally Syrian scholar in the late 1970s, named Muhammed Surur (Lacroix, 2011: 70). Surur denounced the Muslim Brotherhood for being “inclusive and pragmatic,” qualities that obviously Sururis frowned upon (Lacroix, 2011: 69).

Another well-known group that opposed the Sahwa was the “Ahl al-Hadith” group led by al-Albani, who revolted against the Wahhabi/Sahawi monopoly in Saudi Arabia. Although neither the Sururis nor the People of the Hadith (Ahl al-Hadith) were able to challenge, the Sahwa’s control over religious leadership, the latter’s criticism of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood leaders is important:
In 1966, at a time when Islamists of all tendencies, as well as figures of the Wahhabi religious establishment like Ibn Baz, were paying homage to the martyrdom of Sayyid Qutb, who had just been executed at Nasser’s orders, al–Albani was one of the few sheikhs who dared express open criticism. He attacked Qutb’s conception of creed, in which, he argued, he detected signs of the doctrine of the oneness of being (wahdat al-wujud), defined by the Andalusian mystic Ibn Arabi (1165–1240) and identified with Sufism. Elsewhere al-Albani attacked the Brotherhood’s founder Hassan al-Banna, denouncing his positions contrary to the Sunna and insisting on the fact that al-Banna was not a religious scholar (‘alim).

(Lacroix, 2011: 86)

The importance of this lies in its comparison of the different Islamic activist groups in Saudi Arabia over the years ideologically and organizationally:

The allegiance/respect of Sayyid Qutb’s ideas was apparent in combining part of Sayyid Qutb’s writings with Wahhabism, which was also true of the Sururis. However, the Sururis, implicitly adopted the old exclusivist line, takfir was called for, while for the Brotherhood, faithful to the more inclusivist line of their counterparts throughout the Middle East, although any divergence from orthodoxy was extremely blameworthy, it did not necessarily imply exclusion from the community of believers. It is not surprising, therefore, that the individuals selected to represent the kingdom in meetings with Iranian ulema, notably through the Muslim World League, were almost systematically Brothers and never Sururis.

(Lacroix, 2011: 123–124)

The Sururis were more literal and exclusionists in their view of the faith, which always affected their view of the Sahawis. The Sururis were keen on always bringing to the fore how the Muslim Brothers in Egypt and elsewhere were not as traditional in their understanding of the faith. For example, the Muslim Brotherhood ideologue al-Ghazali’s writing about women’s equality or Sa’id Hawa’s writing about Sufism (Lacroix, 2011: 124–125).

As a result of the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, as well as other Muslim countries’ leaders, started sending their respective Islamic activists to fight the Soviets and regain Islamic lands that were under the threat of occupation. The regimes’ encouragement of those activists was tactical in that it distracted the Islamists from domestic politics, and it was also an easy way to reduce their numbers in an armed struggle. The group that was led by Abdallah Azzam and Osama bin Laden was known as the young jihadis in Saudi Arabia. They recruited youth from the Sahwa (Saudi Muslim Brotherhood).

Till this day the Sahwa’s legacy lives on in Saudi Arabia and remains as the major ideological influence on the ground. The Sahwa leaders’ amalgam of some of Qutb’s ideas with Wahhabism was an effort to make those ideas more indigenous for local consumption. The Sahwa’s control over many government agencies and, specifically, the educational system shaped its legacy and effect on Saudi activists, which continue to live on even currently.

The Gulf War in 1990 was also a game changer because Saudi Arabia ceased to be isolated from regional conflict. The involvement of Saudi Arabia in the Gulf War led to a divide that was created between members of the Sahwa regarding the legitimacy of having American forces on Saudi soil and those differences split the movement:

The Sahwa had split into three components laying claim to this ambiguous legacy. One was a “new Sahwa”
made up of ulema who had once again become committed to the exclusive logic of the religious field and refrained from any politicization. The others were the Islamo-liberals and the neojihadis, who tried for a few years to relaunch the mobilization until they were crushed by repression without having achieved the success they had hoped for.

(Lacroix, 2011: 267)

The Salafis of Egypt and the Sahwa movement: is there a connection?

The Salafis of Egypt started growing as a group in the late 1970s. They represented a reaction and an expression of ambition to lead and control the Muslim world. The Salafis were also welcomed by the Mubarak regime to ward off its major political challenger: the Muslim Brotherhood. The Salafis of Egypt comprised two major groups:

A. The Protectors of Sunna\(^6\) (Jama‘at Ansar al-Sunna):

This is the largest Salafi group in Egypt and it maintains strong relations with the Sahawis/Wahhabis of Saudi Arabia. The group managed to spread into different governorates and its extensive spread in terms of sheer numbers and influence was especially evident in the governorate of Alexandria. This group has similar branches in countries like Sudan, Eritrea, Chad and Central African countries. This is not to say that these groups are unified; however, they adhere to the same religio-political ideology (Ahmed, 2013: 7). The ideological leader of TPS is Mohamed el-Fikki. The rules and guidelines of TPS largely reflect the contemporary Wahhabi convictions, such as the principle of monotheism (\textit{al-tawheed}), the rejection of Sufis and Shiites and the unequal treatment of women (Ahmed, 2013: 8).

B. The Legal Association of the Followers of the Qur’an and Sunna\(^2\)

This group was created before the TPS, and they were purely a religious group with no interest in politics, till the 1970s. LAFQS is closer to the Muslim Brotherhood in its ideology and practice. The group critiqued the government in its publications; however, like the Muslim Brothers, they did not want to uproot society; they maintained that change should be gradual. The Wahhabis also influenced the group in that they wanted to change how people were reverting to heretical practices (Sufism).

Both those groups had no political hierarchy and were not initially interested in politics till recently (Ahmed, 2013: 9). The position of the Salafis changed erratically on the eve of the 25 January 2011 revolution. One of the Salafis rejected the revolution in a public speech, claiming that it is Islamically illegal to revolt against the leader of the country. Again, in April 2012 a Salafi made a public statement against the revolutionaries, expressing that they should return to their homes and that whoever gets killed in the confrontation with the regime is not a martyr. (Ahmed, 2013: 9–10)
However, on 15 June 2011, a Salafi Party was created: the Enlightenment (al-Nur), that is after the fall of Mubarak. The main Salafi who pushed for this tactical change was Emad Abdel Ghafour, who was living in Turkey and returned a few months before the 25 January revolution (Ahmed, 2013: 10). The Salafis claimed that their sudden interest in politics came about because they refused to deal with the corrupt Mubarak government like the Muslim Brothers; that is they refused to run for elections, did not join the revolution and so on because they claimed that they always distanced themselves from the corruption, unlike the Muslim Brothers. The Salafis attempted to delegitimize the Muslim Brothers by basically claiming that they were part of the political system under Mubarak.

As opposed to the Muslim Brothers, the Salafis were against the idea of a “civil government” and saw this notion as a roundabout way to create a secular government. The Salafis also agreed to democratic practices but vehemently disagree with democratic ideas such as the sovereignty of the people. Salafis believe that sovereignty is God’s, which highlights their similarity to the Sahawis/Wahhabis, in congruence with the Qutbist principle of the “sovereignty of God” (al-Hakimiya li’Llah) in his late writings.

The Salafis rejection of a civil government (i.e. non-religious/non-sectarian) was also because they feared that Islamic law would not be observed in the new constitution. In the midst of post-revolutionary turmoil, the Salafis public reactions drew attention to the group:

- In Christmas 2012 the Salafis refused to congratulate or recognize the Coptic minority’s celebration, something that the Muslim Brothers were keen on since their creation in 1928.
- Although the Salafis declared equality in human dignity with regards to women, they still expressed that a dress code should be enforced on women. They also expressed that they do not agree to women’s participation in politics or their mingling with the opposite sex. Thus, forcing the women away from public life and into a much more conservative role than that expressed by the Muslim Brothers.
- As opposed to the Muslim Brothers belief in laissez-faire economics, the Salafists are more left of the center in terms of ideology, because they believe it is necessary to relieve the lower socio-economic echelons by redistributing wealth and resources

(Ahmed, 2013: 11)
The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

ISIS is a by-product of the US military’s intervention in Iraq: aside from its high-ranking personnel, who mostly belong to Saddam’s military, there are also members who defected from al-Qaeda in Iraq. An example of that is Ayub al-Masri, who joined the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1970s/early 1980s, then went on to Afghanistan to fight with al-Qaeda in 1982. Al-Masri was killed in 2010 by US forces near Tikrit, Iraq. Abu Ayub al-Masri was responsible for creating al-Qaeda’s branch/cell in Iraq in 2003 (New Terror Chief, CNN transcripts, 15 June 2006).

The two executive branches of ISIS are (1) “Al Imara,” where Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is the “caliph” and Abu Ali al-Anbari and Abu Muslim al-Turkmani are his deputies and (2) the Shura Council, the council responsible for basically justifying the killing and any religious edicts that the “al-Imara” sees fit. The Shura Council also oversees the rest of ISIS personnel and leaders.

Theoretically and historically, the council could de-throne Abu Bakr (the “caliph”); however, given the hierarchy and ruthlessness of “al-Imara,” it is highly unlikely that the council would challenge the “caliph.”


After the death of Abu Omar al-Baghdadi in 2010, the council swore in Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the current “head of state”/“caliph.” Abu Bakr’s rise to power was also supported by state failure in Syria after the Arab Spring uprisings. Although Abu Bakr faced difficulty in subordinating the leader of Jabhat al-Nusra: al-Golani, defections from Jabhat al-Nosra and the credibility of power, organization, weapons and training: all paved the way for Abu-Bakr’s leadership of ISIS (CNN: The Anatomy of ISIS, 10/27/2014).

Therefore, as illustrated in this chapter, ideologically al-Qaeda’s version of Wahhabism, and therefore Salafism, too, has both affected ISIS’s claims to justice and legitimacy.

A number of factors examined here have led to ISIS’s growth:

2. State failure in Syria after the people’s rise in protest against al-Assad’s regime
3. As a result of state failure in both Syria and Iraq, the interference of regional and international powers led to domestic fictionalization and a deepened condition of statelessness.
4. Thus, the infiltration of al-Qaeda and ISIS was a tactical development that directly correlates to foreign policies and domestic conflicts that destabilized the states and allowed ISIS and its military to manipulate internal divisions as well as suppressed minorities to create deeper rifts in those stateless nations.
Conclusion

The main hypothesis of this chapter was that the growth of Wahhabism affected the transformation and threat of a more militant Islam throughout the Muslim world; however, through research and the clear ideological delineation, it was discovered that not only are the second and third waves of Wahhabism causal to militancy and the spread of it but also that increased repression, in this case, by the Egyptian regime under Nasser, radicalized Islamic activists to the extent that more than twenty years this radicalized ideology was fighting the moderate Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Thus, this chapter is further proof that political repression results in the radicalization of political movements as expressed in the case of the Sahwa and Salafi trends in today’s Muslim political activist landscape.

The chapter also correlates the repression cycle, which led to an intensification of radicalization and militancy. Therefore, with current repression in the Middle East, ISIS is just another in a long line of militant violent movements in the contemporary Muslim world.
Notes

1 Abdel Salam Faraj is one of President Sadat’s assassins who wrote a manuscript on the reasons for killing Sadat, titled *The Neglected Duty*.

2 One of Sadat’s assassins on 6 October 1981.

3 A late Islamic activist who was the Muslim Brotherhood’s main ideologue.

4 Ibn Taymiya was a Syrian Hanbalite jurist.


6 The Protectors of Sunna hereafter are referred to as TPS for short.

7 The Legal Association of the Followers of the Qur’an and Sunna is referred to as LAFQS hereafter.
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The Islamic State’s notion of “mobile” sovereignty/territoriality in a post-secular perspective

Marina Eleftheriadou and Sotiris Roussos

In the recent decades, there is a growing re-emergence of religion in the public sphere, questioning the secularization theory and challenging the Westphalian state notions, such as the exile of religion to the private sphere and the predominance of the secular/rational over faith and cognition over experience. It is no coincidence that the Treaty of Westphalia, which brought the subordination of religion to the state and brought religious wars to an end, was the same treaty that established the territorial state as the basic unit of the international system (Okhonmina, 2010: 117). The Westphalian system of nation-states was the remedy for religious strife and upheavals that had devastated Europe, and the secularization process, which is placing religion clearly in the private realm, was essential for international politics (Mavelli & Petito, 2012: 933). For a secular state, the first priority is to establish territoriality, that is to homogenize its realm by ostracizing religion and religious (often transnational) communitarianism from the public space. This notion of the Westphalian state is a foreign idea to Islam, which came to the Middle East as a consequence of the 19th-century Westernization process.

The re-emergence of religion in the public sphere has sparked a twofold debate on the post-secular. It refers to the problematic “that emerges when scholars begin to see that the secularization theory fails to make sense of the role that religion actually plays in the modern world” (Schewel, 2014: 49). It also refers to the processes to overcome the dichotomy between the realm of immanence and the realm of the religious transcendence.

This second debate on the post-secular and post-secularism presupposes a Western secular vantage point, arguing that modern secular reason is self-contained and wholly intelligible whereas religious truths are reasonable only to the extent that they are translatable to secular universally accepted principles (Dallmayr, 2012: 965). It also has a normative character insofar as it envisages post-secularism opening space “for the readiness in the West to address its injustices excused by belligerent secularism.” In other words, post-secularism is coming to rectify and not change secular Western worldviews or replace a system of rule with another (Barbato, 2012: 1092, 1097). The state should remain neutral towards strife between religious groups that is to remain
secular, whereas religious traditions, particularly its moral intuitions, should not question the separation of church and state (Pabst, 2012: 1004). Religious traditions could participate in the public debate, as long as the institutionalized decision-making process is separated from the informal flows of political communication in this debate (Habermas, 2008: 28). This notion of post-secular, Pabst has argued, “perpetuates the idea that religion is subordinate to the political authority of national states and one among many equally valid voices within the nascent cosmopolitan public square” (Pabst, 2012: 1004). It, moreover, locks International Relations (IR) into the logic of Western secularism, rendering the religious side of IR marginal (Pabst, 2012: 1009).

Experiencing post-secular requires an agreement on what is secular and secularism. Taylor (2007: 1–3) argues that secularity is characterized, first, by the freedom of the state from any connection or guarantee by some faith or adherence to God. He adds that another understanding is “emptying religion from autonomous social spheres of activity,” economic, political, professional and cultural. This, he (2007: 2) argues, could be compatible with a vast majority of people still believing in God and practising their religion, particularly when secularism is a top-down process imposed by authoritarian states, as in the case of the post-colonial Arab regimes.

In the 20th century, territorial states in the Middle East were imposed by colonial powers, accompanied by a top-down secularization process, which tried to impose a nation-state homogenization, to force religion into the private realm and to bring Islamic institutions under state control. Early Arab nationalists, particularly in Iraq and Syria, claimed that a common language and history, rather than religion, were the foundations of a nation’s formation (Simon, 1997: 90). Religion, Islam in particular, was a mere component of the larger national culture and a glorious period of the common historical past. Territorial states became both the agents and the objects of secular nationalism in the Middle East (Gershoni & Jankowski, 1997: xx).

In the case of the Islamic worldview of territoriality/sovereignty, the community of the faithful, rather than the state, is in the focus of Islamic doctrine. War is waged between groups of people: between the community of the faithful (ummah) and the world of the non-believers, Dar al-Harb (Tibi, 1996: 188–189). However, the emergence of the caliphate, the need to safeguard its realm from mightier empires and internal frictions and/or incapability of launching jihad created the principles of the interest of the Islamic state and of war for safeguarding the frontiers, which significantly influence the Islamic notion of territoriality (Parvin & Sommer, 1980: 13).

The Ottoman Empire was never based on the Western secular notion of a nation-state structure imposing homogeneity but, rather, was a mosaic of different confessions, ethnicities and loyalties, often overlapping each other and flowing across boundaries. The territorial states, created by the colonial powers, never managed to replace this mosaic of different confessions and loyalties with genuine nationstate homogeneity and could not resolve the basic contradiction between a socio-political and scientific education based on secular assumptions and an everyday life based on the Islamic religious assumptions. Moreover, as Crooke (2015) notes, these states “lacked the national ‘homogeneity’ that would permit a ‘social contract’ between governors and governed to be agreed, and as a consequence, the whole ‘Arab system’ has fallen into popular discredit.”

The post–Cold War quasi-unipolar international system was held responsible for the collapse
of the state of Iraq, resulting in the ongoing social and economic devastation of the country and
the destabilization of the geostrategic heart of the region. It was held, also, responsible for the still
unresolved Arab–Israeli conflict and the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories. Also, the
project of establishing quasi-secular/rational states, such as Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Algeria, on the
boundaries set by the colonial powers, reached its limits and lost its legitimacy among the people,
whose primary demand for dignity presents a crisis not only economic and social but also cultural
and ethical.

All these developments led to a “Sunni crisis,” as the Sunni Muslim communities felt
marginalized and alienated from power. They, consequently, felt to be drawn into a politics of
incoherence. The “Islamic State” (IS) appeared as a “corrective” force of this socio-political
incoherence, and it is not a coincidence that it made use of the teachings of early Muslim
thinkers, such as Ibn Tayyimiya, who taught in the time of the Mughal invasions (Crooke, 2015).
The IS is a hybrid jihadist organization borrowing and incorporating strategic and ideological
elements from al-Qaeda, Hezbollah and the governing structures of the Taliban and the Ba’athist
Iraq (Khatib, 2015: 3). It has been influenced by a hybrid ideology combining the main elements of
Salafism and the Muslim Brotherhood’s political Islam (Hassan, 2016). It came to challenge the
Westphalian international order, through its attack on the state territoriality, as a man-made
attribute of the state that cannot be taken as sacrosanct, particularly when it is contrary to God’s
will and to the advancement of true and pure Islamic rule. Thus, there is a notion of “mobile
territoriality” according to a divine plan rather than based on the secular/rational assumptions of
the Westphalian state.

However, by negating the secular, IS has never abandoned the rationality of the secular state.
The experience of God and rationality are not in binary positions. The re-emergence of religion as
sovereignty and territoriality marker is not a neo-traditional falling back to the periods of the first
caliphs but has been largely informed by modern Arab states’ context of politics. We are trying to
expose this endeavour in the most significant aspects of state-in-war, such as military strategy,
command-and-control structures, wartime bureaucracy and expansion strategies.

The chapter questions Habermasian Western vantage-point views of post-secularism as a
normative problem-solving process, which would lead to an irenic inclusion of religion as a viable
perspective in building a healthy Western society. It also questions essentialist understandings of
the relationship between religion and politics that attempt to detach the definition of this
relationship from the social, historical and cultural processes that produce it.

Regardless of how the IS fares militarily and politically in the printing time of this chapter, its
ideology, strategy and model of “state-building” will remain a persisting challenge. The IS
signalled a paradigm change in the jihadist movement’s strategy. The IS’s hybrid state is perhaps
the first model of transnational state organization for the jihadi movement. Until the creation of
the “caliphate,” the jihadi movement had a global jihad strategy, exemplified by the al-Qaeda-
type network organization. Moreover, in a global context, it leads to the reconceptualization of
the “new medievalism” debate regarding international organization, in other words, “a system of
overlapping authority and multiple loyalty, held together by a duality of competing universalistic
claims” (Friedrichs, 2001: 475–501).
The Islamic State and post-secularity

Prima facie, the IS appears “textually rigorous and deeply rooted in a pre-modern theological tradition” (Bunzel, 2015: 7). The IS is, indeed, confident in its anticipation of the apocalypse, and it is equally confident in its divinely assigned role of a vanguard (or frontline state) preparing the ground for the “final battle,” which will seal the global dominion of Islam and spur the “End of Times.” However, the IS is not merely an apocalyptic/eschatological organization, but it also ascribes to a deeply millenarian project as well (Berger, 2015). According to the IS’s interpretation of the divine plan and in line with the “prophetic methodology,” the core prerequisite for the divine revelation is the victory of the (narrowly defined) “righteous” Muslims against the “Crusader” and apostate forces and the pre-destined reunification of the ummah. Ummah, as a utopian society in the making, assumes the role of carrier for a project of revolutionary rearrangement of socio-political relations, locally and internationally.

Although revolutionary in nature, the IS carries the exact same old-world features it wants to eradicate. Established in reaction to the flaws of the current system and its constituents (secularism, nation-state and insatiable capitalism), The IS, below the surface of eschatological discourse, rests on foundations deeply rooted in the very modernity it rejects in abhorrence. In this sense, the IS employs the “conveniences” and builds on the remnants of the secular world it aspires to eliminate. In the words of the former IS spokesman, Abu Mousa, “[w]e are not sending people back to the time of the carrier pigeon... On the contrary, we will benefit from development. But in a way that doesn’t contradict the religion” (Atran, 2015).

This symbiosis between secular and religious, rationality and belief, cognition and lived experience is not restricted to the propaganda level (serving a conceptual bridge from the old to the new world). On the contrary, this post-secular coexistence is replicated on every level of the IS’s concrete strategy to dominate the world: military conquest, administrative consolidation and territorial expansion.
Military strategy of conquest

Under the surface of religiously sanctioned violence and conquest of holy territories, the military strategy of the IS seemed to rest on known military paradigms, as distinct as the Bedouin fighting mode (DeAtkine, 2015) and strategic cultures linked to Genghis Khan, Hitler, Lenin, Mao and the US (Anderson, 2014). The organization that had until recently claimed to run a state across large swaths of territory in Syria and Iraq was close to extinction, in 2010, when Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi took the reins. In the past few years, it progressed from an organization on the run (with a military repertoire limited to suicide attacks and occasional gunfights) to an offensive military force capable of complex operations. With the expansion into Syria and the 2013 spring merger into a single organization called the “Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham” (ISIS), IS forces manifested a capacity to operate on a theatre-level, as well.

Over these years and despite the recent military setbacks, the IS had mastered manoeuvre warfare while demonstrating a capability for advanced coordination and mobility and evidence of increasing regularization as a military force. The transition from a guerrilla (terrorist) force to an organized army requires widespread reforms and fast institutional learning to be sustainable. The IS appeared to progress successfully on both accounts. Since 2013, the IS had demonstrated a re-centralized command-and-control system that allowed local initiative at the execution level (Knights, 2014). This upgraded command structure resulted in a faster – and steady – tempo of attacks (Wyer, 2012) – coordinated over time and space – and a richer repertoire of attack types (Bilger, 2014). Furthermore, the increasing use of probes, feints and diversion tactics and the relatively smooth tactical incorporation of armoured vehicles and artillery (Knights, 2014), revealed deeper knowledge of professional army requirements. Beyond the narrow military aspect, managing a large semi-professional military force goes hand-in-hand with bureaucratization that rationalizes the command-and-control system. The IS developed a rigorous system of file keeping, as documents seized in Sinjar, Bilawi and elsewhere demonstrate (Felter & Fishman, 2007; Jung et al., 2014; Chulov, 2014). From simple personnel rosters to rigorous financial supervision and anti-corruption measures, these files reveal a complex bureaucratic mechanism.

The short period, during which these changes took place, and the fact that they occurred while the IS was on the move, has given rise to allegations of former Ba’athist officers’ imprint. Indeed, IS manifested a good understanding of the Iraq belt system, with roots in Saddam Hussein’s Baghdad defence design (Lewis, 2015). Likewise, Ba’athist influences can be found in the IS’s tactical repertoire, such as the widespread use of “Suicide Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices,” as a substitute for artillery, particularly at the outset of an offensive (Barfi, 2016). The Ba’athist footprint in the spectacular military transformation of the IS has been widely debated. The Shia Iraqi establishment has been a strong supporter of the theory of an alleged Ba’athist hand in IS’s creation and success (ICG, 2014: 5; Sly, 2015). Western media have been also particularly fond of the Ba’athist conspiracy theory (Reuter, 2015).
Despite its elegance, the master plan of a Ba’athist takeover seems dubious. On one hand, there are still groups within the Sunni insurgency that represent purely Ba’athist ideas (e.g. Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandia [JRTN]), even though currently they are largely irrelevant in military terms. On the other hand, the presence of former Ba’athists in IS ranks, although undisputable, is not a particularly novel phenomenon (Caillet, 2015; Tønnessen, 2015: 55–57). Most important, instead of plotting their return, they were fully incorporated in the IS vision. Some are products of Saddam Hussein’s “Faith Campaign” in the 1990s that hatched a generation of Islamized military officers, but most of the IS’s former Ba’athist personnel, in fact, constitute a new generation who had minimal contact with either Ba’athist or Islamic ideas before 2003 (Tønnessen, 2015: 53). Products of Ba’athist patronage system rather than its beliefs, they fell victims of post-2003 de-Ba’athification and subsequent unemployment. Some briefly fought against the US with Ba’athist or Sunni groups, and devoid of any strong connection to Ba’athism, they became easy prey for Islamists in the prisons they were both kept (Tønnessen, 2015: 50).

In any case, the Ba’athist angle and the “conventionality” this implies tend to downplay the hybridity of the IS’s military profile. IS moves with ease across a wide spectrum of fighting styles (from terrorism to guerrilla warfare to semi-conventional war). As such, it equally benefits from lessons and accumulated know-how from the Iraqi and foreign (Chechen) insurgencies (Barfi, 2016). Technically an insurgency version of the “Clear, Hold, Build” COIN strategy (Bilger, 2014), the IS’s plan of subversion, consolidation and expansion is a carefully crafted phased strategy, where the secular becomes translatable through the religious. The first step consists of vigorous intelligence collection and gradual encroachment, with “benign” da’awa offices often playing the role of battering ram. Next, with the help of the collected intelligence, the earned goodwill of the population and tactical alliances with tribes and militant groups, the IS forces “clear” the area from hostile elements and competitors, gradually establish a military presence and, ultimately, control over territory and population (Al-Tamimi, 2015a).

Undoubtedly, this whole enterprise was dressed in notions of imminent apocalypse. However, under the surface, the unholy alliances, the elimination of religious and political opponents and the ethno-sectarian cleansing were conceived and executed with – selective – population homogenization in mind. Cleared of all corruptive or unwanted elements, the remaining population was stripped to its sectarian-religious identity, rendering it more mixable with the foreign Muslims that settle in the new state. In this sense, IS military strategy employed outward and inward migration as a means to construct a population for its authority. This socially engineered population, consisting of fighters and “civilian citizens” (a distinction that IS largely disavows), did not seek “martyrhood,” as a path to salvation (Dodwell, Milton & Rassler, 2016: 28–29). It was destined to build a heaven on earth, ideal for women and families.
Administrative consolidation

In a 2007 treatise, a jihadi scholar, Uthman bin abd al-Rahman al-Tamimi, noted that “although IS will improve citizens’ conditions in both their religious and worldly affairs, improvement of their worldly conditions is less important than the condition of their religion” (Fishman, 2007). This early declaration of IS’s responsibilities vis-à-vis its population served mainly a defensive purpose. Al-Tamimi wanted to lower the expectations for the then struggling IS predecessor, and interestingly enough, he used globalization and the eroding sovereignty of modern states to justify his point. In his first public speech in July 2014, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi reiterated, “I do not promise you, as the kings and rulers promise their followers and congregation, of luxury, security, and relaxation; instead, I promise you what Allah promised His faithful worshipers... [to] make them rulers on the land” (SITE Intelligence Group, 2014).

According to the IS’s magazine, Dabiq, the concerns and traps of Dunya (the temporal world) should be disavowed (bara), and instead, waging jihad, as an expression of loyalty (wala) to God’s will, should become the main preoccupation of the IS’s “followers.” Still, Dabiq admits that “a state cannot be established and maintained without ensuring that a portion of the sincere soldiers of Allah look after both the religious and worldly affairs of the Muslims” (Dabiq no.4, 2014: 28). In its effort to look after the worldly affairs of its “chosen citizenry,” the IS effectively high-jacked the state institutions and infrastructure. Taking advantage of the unprecedented inflow of new talent and the rationalization of recruits’ profiling process (Dodwell, Milton & Rassler, 2016), the IS had kick-started its state-building project. In a demonstration of operational economy, the IS replicated – with the necessary adjustments – its military bureaucratic system to administer civilian affairs. The result was a hierarchical administration system that consisted of diwans, committees and central joints that extended from the level of central authority down to provinces (wilayats) and the local level (al-Tamimi, 2015a: 117–129; Lavoix, 2015; Caris, & Reynolds, 2014: 14–23). General guidelines were set centrally, but they were executed according to local conditions and needs. Around this core structure, a large number of directorates and sub-directorates regulated a wide array of issues. Naturally, the more entrenched IS was in particular areas, the broader and more inclusive the administrative structure was.

Although the IS negates the – secular – need for a constitution and codified laws because the Quran provides all that is necessary, it has issued an unthinkable amount of orders and regulations dealing with the slightest aspect of daily life, indirectly acknowledging that in Quran “rules do not exist for every conceivable matter” (March & Revkin, 2015). For example, the IS has issued rules and defined punishments for behaviours and activities ranging from espionage, adultery, apostasy and witchcraft to embezzlement, burglaries, parking violations and using Apple products (March & Revkin, 2015). The IS has also demonstrated its environmental and urban planning concerns, as it has forbidden the use of electrical current, poison or dynamite to kill fish and it has issued directives on how much of the pavement shop-keepers can occupy to
display their merchandise. Moreover, other regulations dealt with issues such as property rights, selling counterfeit products and excavation of antiquities or set fix prices for rents and childbirth operations.6

Most important, the IS forged a social contract with its subjects, similar to the one modern states forge with their citizens – a social contract which, like other (Arab) social contracts that preceded, “provides security, subsidized basic staples, and social services in exchange for political quiescence” (Barfi, 2016). The population was expected to respect the law and pay taxes in exchange for personal and social security, public services and some rights, such as filing complaints against IS officials (March & Revkin, 2015). Corporal punishments for thieves and publicized police raids against drugs, cigarettes and alcohol smugglers paint a picture of heavy-handed, yet total, security. Offenders were subject to extreme, yet rational, justice, with predefined legal steps and set penalties, although actual law enforcement varied across regions.6

Next to personal security, food adequacy was one of the biggest IS priorities. Acknowledging the importance of food and, particularly, bread in controlling and placating the population, the IS rushed to seize mills and bakeries early in its effort to conquer a city or a region (Al-Tamimi, 2015a; Reuter, 2015; Caris & Reynolds, 2014: 22). The extensive expropriations (from fleeing “apostates”) and redistribution of farmlands (March & Revkin, 2015) that followed show that the IS recognized the propaganda value of food security. Likewise, the IS has repeatedly stressed the centrality of Zakat and publicized its efforts to feed the needy through free public iftar meals during Ramadan and open food kitchens (Dabiq no.2, 2014: 35; Alkhouri & Kassirer, 2015).

Public services and critical infrastructure improvements are next in line. The IS claimed to repair and install new electricity power lines, clean the streets, fix potholes, run buses and operate post offices (Al-Tamimi, 2015a; Zelin, 2014). Moreover, it operated hospitals, a synthetic body parts factory and pharmaceutical factories in Syria and Iraq. The IS publications and video releases featured Western-educated and local doctors in fully equipped operation theatres (Dabiq no.9: 24–6; Islamic State, 2015). Modern science seems to bode well with education, as well. The curricula of schools and universities and textbooks were rewritten to agree with the new ideals, but Social Sciences and to some extent Humanities seem to be the only victims of the “educational reform” (Al-Tamimi, 2015b: spec. 5A). Interestingly, contrary to other radical Islamist state projects (the Taliban), primary education was mandatory for all children, girls or boys, albeit in sex-segregated schools. In a similar vein, vaccinations were encouraged (Alkhouri & Kassirer, 2015), and even more interestingly, HIV-testing was provided (Bedolla & Bedolla, 2016), thus setting aside religious connotations of innovation (bid’a) and “divine punishment.” Last but not least, completing the list of services that the secular governments failed to provide, IS regularly posted employment opportunities, even providing free religious re-education, if necessary (Al-Tamimi, 2015b: spec. J, K, L).

Such a deep involvement into a population’s worldly affairs generates a type of duality where religious law and governance mix and cross-pollinate. Duality takes the form of a de facto division between “administration” and “Muslim services” (Caris & Reynolds, 2014: 14). Administration, on one hand, includes institutions and policy fields that relate directly to the IS’s politico-religious project, such as Islamic outreach, Sharia institutes, education, law enforcement,
courts, recruitment and tribal relations. Services, on the other, include all these mundane issues and projects that aim at improving the worldly lives of the subjects and winning their hearts and minds. This duality was replicated in the IS’s law enforcement and judiciary system as separate police forces and courts dealt with different crimes and violations (SNHR, 2016: 3–4; March & Revkin, 2015). In fact, one may discern also a duality in the penalties and detention conditions in the dozens of known and secret IS-run prisons. According to SNHR (2016), the IS tended to mistreat (i.e. torture) “offenders,” who utterly reject the IS utopia project, either through their crimes or general stance. Minor offences were treated with more leniency. Penalties, in this case, were repentance-driven, favouring a correctional, instead of punitive, approach to transgression. Before their release, minor offenders were required to take religious lessons from designated sheikhs as a prerequisite to reentering society and savouring its God-given gifts and conveniences.
Territorial expansion

The basic tenet of the IS’s conceptualization of territoriality rests on the conviction that the “rebirth of the ummah and the caliphate... require deterritorializing and dismantling the colonial geopolitical heritage and its national borders and nation states and reterritorializing the ummah and caliphate” (Jabareen, 2015: 53). Indeed, the IS has, on several occasions, rejected nationalism or any type of factionalism that stands in the way of a united ummah (Dabiq no. 8, 2015: 3–6). As al-Baghdadi stated in 2012, “the Islamic State does not recognize synthetic borders, nor any citizenship besides Islam” (Bunzel, 2015: 24). This statement has two implications. The first implication is that IS is inherently global and that it believes that no aspects of territorial sovereignty, such as “borders... passports or visas [will] prevent [it from expanding]” (Dabiq no.5, 2014: 23) and raising IS’s flag in “Makkah and al-Madinah... Baytul-Maqdis and Rome” (Dabiq no.5, 2014: 3). In this light, all states but the IS are considered illegitimate. Therefore, it does not see itself as part of and does not have any “commitments towards the international community.” Second, it denotes IS’s transnational inclusiveness. In his July 2014 speech, Baghdadi made this clear by describing the IS as a place where “the Arab and non-Arab, the white man and black man... Chinese, Shami, Iraqi, Yemeni... French, German... [are] brothers” (Dabiq no.1, 2014: 7). Likewise, contrary to modern states, racial hatred seems to have no place in it (Dabiq no.11, 2015: 19) since the only citizenship criterion is being a Muslim. Hence, as Cori Dauber pointedly notes, “Western claims regarding multiculturalism are turned on their head: it is the Islamic State that is truly multicultural, truly color blind, where true equality is possible” (2015).

The imagery of bulldozed borders and foreign fighters burning their passports built the image of global citizenship that did not even require (although highly encouraged) physical presence inside the IS’s “temporary” borders. The pledge of allegiance (ba’ya) automatically granted (semi-)citizenship. In fact, citizenship was “obligatory,” given that “whoever dies without a pledge of allegiance [to the new caliph], dies a death of jahiliyyah.” According to the IS, there is no need to “dispatch an army and soldiers” to claim the obedience of its subjects around the world; the presence of the IS delegates or even merely the news of the restoration of the caliphate is deemed sufficient to sustain this claim (Dabiq no.10, 2015: 23). The news about the restoration of the Caliphate, in the era of information, reached instantly every corner of the globe, thus rendering the IS claim to Muslim global mobile citizenship “effective immediately.”

In practice, the IS’s mobile territoriality takes a much more complex form, where territorial and non-territorial sovereignty coexist. Schematically, the IS perceives the world in terms of three geographical rings. The first one represents the core and covers the areas of Mesopotamia. The second is the Muslim-majority countries in the wider area of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The third, the external one, covers the rest of the world: Europe, America and Asia (Gambhir, 2015: 9–12). In each ring, the IS operates under different territorial conceptualization and strategy.
In the IS’s narrative, the artificial borders cutting through the heartland of Dar al-Islam are products of the “Crusader” master plan to control the region. The Arab revolt, Arab flags, Arab nationalism and rulers are all part of the plan to keep the Sunnis weak and divided and this is nowhere more evident than in Syria and Iraq (Dabiq no. 9, 2015: 20–23). By expanding into Syria and merging the two fronts, IS signalled the rupture of Sykes–Picot territorial configuration. The territorial expansion into Syria was dressed with intense eschatological discourse. Al-Sham was presented as having a central role in the divine plan, particularly Damascus and Dabiq (in northern Syria), the former being the stronghold of Islamic forces during the Armageddon and the latter witnessing the final battle against the forces of the non-believers (Dabiq no.3, 2014: 9–10; Dabiq no.4, 2014: 32–37; Dabiq no.9, 2015: 36). However, until its last period of vigour, the IS had not put any serious effort to conquer Damascus. Likewise, although Dabiq was brought under the IS’s control in the summer of 2014, it did not proceed with pushing further north towards Turkey. Such a move would have forced the hand of “Operation Inherent Resolve” or NATO and would have fulfilled the prophecy that a “horde of 80 banners” will line up against the forces of Islam in Dabiq. Instead, it opted for a more rational strategy. Reaching Dabiq and having secured its access to the Turkish border, it turned east in an effort to strengthen the perimeter around its de facto capital, Raqqa. The unsuccessful seize of Kobani was part of this plan. This territorial advance had an additional purpose that also aimed at territorial consolidation, securing its rear and filling in the gaps in Hassakah and Deir ez-Zor, which border the Iraqi provinces of Anbar and Nineveh. At the other side of the border, after the fall of Mosul, the IS forces converged by moving to the west and southwest. This way it created a contiguous zone, controlling most of the Sunni triangle, that linked its main strongholds in Nineweh (Mosul) and Raqqa.

In consonance with the idea of mobile sovereignty, the IS shares no bond with any particular territory, and despite its claims to the contrary, it does not put any specific effort to defend its territorial gains if outnumbered. On the contrary, the decision to establish itself in one area, in the early stages of the insurgency, or to expand to a new one follows the path of least resistance or, as one scholar put it, “avoiding surfaces and exploiting gaps” (Anderson, 2014). Likewise, the IS has shown no intention to be pinned down, defending territory, when the possibility of defeat or the price in fighters and resources is high unless the territory in question is of major symbolical importance (e.g. Mosul). Before they abandon an area, however, they implement a scorched-earth strategy by destroying the infrastructure with which normal life could resume. (Mello & Knights, 2015) Another aspect of the IS’s territorial strategy is securing access to borders, and it is exactly this loss of borderlands that precipitated the IS’s territorial shrinkage and eventual demise in Syria and Iraq. Border control serves a dual purpose. On one hand, it provides control over cross-border trade and smuggling routes, which can yield significant economic benefits (via formal and informal taxation) and might help placate the tribes that are involved in smuggling. Additionally, it provides an entry point for much needed foreign fighters. On the other hand, forward access to borderlands can act as a staging ground for expansion into neighbouring countries.

If, by changing its name to ISIS, the IS announced its expansion into Syria, its decision to erase any territorial reference advertised the initiation of expansion beyond its Mesopotamian core. Expansion into the second geographical ring rested less on military conquest, because of the IS’s
limited capacity of physical power projection, and more on the declaration of ba’ya from established militant forces. Nevertheless, ba’ya is not sufficient to herald expansion in the form of new wilayats. The IS set specific preconditions: unification of the jihadi forces operating in the area, nomination of a leader, a detailed plan of military conquest and submission of the “file” to IS central authorities for evaluation and approval (Dabiq no.7, 2015: 35). On these grounds, bay’as from Sinai, Libya, Yemen, Algeria, the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia) and Nigeria resulted in the creation of wilayats while the wilayats in Caucasus and Khorasan (Af-Pak) were delayed, and other ba’yas were accepted but not considered for official expansion (Dabiq no.5, 2014: 24). These preconditions, as well as the transition from emirates to wilayats and from emirs to walis, signal the importance the IS places on territorial consolidation, the capacity of the local forces to achieve it and expansion along the path of least resistance. This applies to all new wilayats, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, Algeria and, to some extent, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Expansion into Saudi Arabia was mainly guided by religious and ideological reasons while, in the other two cases, antagonism with al-Qaeda must have played an important role. Likewise, failure to fulfil these preconditions and the lack of politico-religious significance has led the IS to withhold official recognition as wilayats elsewhere. The Philippines, where a significant portion of the Abu Sayyaf group under the leadership of Isnilon Hapilon swore allegiance as early as July 2014 is a case in point. There, the limited and often unstable territorial control of affiliated forces, as the Marawi siege later indicated, the fragmentation of Islamist forces – locally and in the wider South-East Asia region – and the unyielding determination of the Duterte government to crush the insurgency had prompted the IS to accept the bay’a but not to proclaim the creation of a new wilayat (Jayakumar, 2017).

The official rationale for expanding into specific areas is a mix of religious and strategic reasoning. For example, Sinai is presented as a natural part of al-Sham and “a front against the Jews” while it also is the place of mountain at-Tur where God spoke to Moses (Dabiq no.5, 2014: 28–9). The IS also highlights the proximity of these areas that allow the groups to help each other and eventually close the ranks between them and the IS in Syria and Iraq (Dabiq no.5, 2014: 28, 32). Moreover, in terms of further expansion, Libya and Algeria carry the historical weight of being the staging grounds for expanding into Spain, as the first step towards the conquer of the third and last geographical ring, Europe and the Western world (Dabiq no.5, 2014: 30).

Expansion into the external ring started before the consolidation of the IS forces in the second ring, demonstrating that the IS could operate and expand in a nonlinear fashion. Indeed, Dabiq moved from an imagery of a functioning state to one of an unpredictable force capable to wreak havoc wherever it chooses. In its call to the global Islamic citizenry, it states that inability to perform hijra is no excuse for not “performing jihād against the enemies of Islam near him” (Dabiq no.11, 2015: 54).

The true rationale behind the surge of attacks in the West can have several possible, and highly contradicting, explanations. For example, the IS could have fallen victim of its “myth of unstoppable progress” (Barrett, 2015: 1), which, after the loss of territory in Syria/Iraq, left it with no option but to expand the ring of attacks or perish. However, IS might, in a clear act of belligerence, intended to hasten the final battle by inducing its enemies to scale their intervention,
betting on its victory under the current global configuration and local circumstances. Not less likely, however, and away from rational cost/benefit analysis, the IS might have been engulfed in its apocalyptic visions of an imminent end (Rapoport, 2016).

In this sense, this transcendent appeal of IS message does not only require a complete reconfiguration of the international system beyond the Westphalian order, but it also challenges the very conceptualization of political authority and sovereignty. Nonetheless, the IS appeared to contemplate a role as a member of the current secular international system (Dabiq no. 12, 2015: 48–50). The IS indirectly adopts the term “revolutionary state-building organisation,” coined by Stephen Walt (2015), in order to describe its nature. Furthermore, in the same article, the author is connecting the IS to the examples of previous, revolutionary state-building organizations, such as the Bolshevik and the Maoist revolutionaries. Both organizations challenged the configuration and conceptualization of the world order but eventually they were granted recognition by the international system. This international recognition and inclusion into the international system would not have meant acceptance by the IS of the evil character of this man-made system. On the contrary, it sought to reconcile an Islamic worldview with a secular international reality of multiple territorial states through the option of truce in Sharia law.
Conclusion

In order to facilitate its faith-based territoriality, the IS developed a strategy of expansion along three geographical rings: the first is the Iraq–Syria ring; the second is the near abroad, namely the wider Middle East; and the third is the rest of the world, including the Dar al-Harb, the non-Muslim countries.

In the first ring, territoriality takes the form of contiguous territory. In this, the IS pursued a policy of selective population homogenization through outward and inward migration, following the model of secular nation-state’s project. In the second, expansion resembled forward positions which eventually would converge and unite. Expansion of sovereignty is based on a dual principle: allegiance (ba’ya) from organizations and groups (not individuals) and the fulfilment of specific conditions that demonstrate these groups’ capacity to consolidate and expand, on one hand, and their submission to the scrutiny and the rule of the core, the Sharia council in Syria–Iraq, on the other. In the third ring, territoriality and sovereignty take the form of individual bay’a that qualifies somebody to become “citizen” of the IS in the Dar al-Harb, with all the rights and war responsibilities of such qualification.

As regional territorial states, particularly Iraq and Syria, collapse, this failure of the nation-state project challenges the borders, which were drawn by the colonial powers after the Great War. Rendering these boundaries irrelevant, the IS’s expansion has not only seriously challenged the territorial basis of the nation-state initiated by colonialism, but it also claims that it thwarts all the machinations of the Crusaders, be it the US, the European colonial powers or their allies. For the IS, the international order reflects a domination of the idolatry and the subordination of the Muslim communities to infidel powers. It also rejects international laws and norms since they are barren of divine justice and morality. At the same time, however, the IS contemplates its membership in the current secular international system.

A substantial part of the Sunni Arabs in Syria and particularly in Iraq thought of the IS as a corrective power which would remedy the demise and the socio-political marginalization of the Sunni element vis-à-vis the Shia/Alawite domination and fight “injustice, humiliation and dishonor” brought by external intervention, neo-liberal attacks on social justice, and secular state corruption. Because of Iraq’s violent de-Ba’athification, a number of Sunni Iraqis lost their sources of income, were disgraced and vulnerable to economic hardship, lost their power and were ruled by their former subordinates (Shia). Sunni alienation from the nation-state project enabled the IS to translate its faith-based ideology through secular terms. For the IS, the regimes were illegitimate, not only because, as apostates, they were against Allah but also because, due to their secular, anti-Islamic character, they cannot provide their people with dignity and rights they promised them. In other words, the IS rests the validity of its metaphysical worldview on the failure of the secular project to uphold a “social contract” between the rulers and governed. Hence, provision of services, security and justice were seen as types of active (or constructive)
resistance to corrupt leaders. The IS attempted to reconstruct the “social contract,” led now authentically by faith.

The IS employed a number of functions, strategies and agencies that have been advanced in the secular/rational Westphalian state, as these were adopted by the Syrian and Iraqi modern states. In a way, the IS strove to establish a hybrid state, where rational cognition is translated through religious vocabulary, in order to be combined with the central role of religion in the public space. It does not repudiate reason in the form of either technology or the results of institutionalized sciences. An extensive bureaucratic mechanism (military and administrative) under the supervision of a central authority (sharia council), extreme violence (a common feature in the Iraqi and Syrian secular nation-state projects) and the use of modern military strategies and tactics were secular/rational conduits for transplanting religious forms of life and society. The provision of services, security and justice and the upholding of a “social contract” were common languages that make these forms intelligible to the society.

We can, hence, argue that the IS’s post-secularity comes from a non-Western vantage point. The religious is not translated through the secular, and it does not serve the latter’s interests. It appropriates and transforms the secular structures and idioms in order for the religious to become translatable to various sections of the society. It does not use secular ideas and agents as mere instruments, as the appropriated secular structures become built-in elements of the IS’s hybrid state, far, however, from a norm of irenic symbiosis between the religious and the secular.
Notes

1 In contrast, the Shia deem themselves the rising power. The Shia parties control the central government in Iraq, the Resistance Bloc is the dominant power in Lebanon and the sanctions against Iran have been lifted.

2 References to apocalypse abound in Islamic State’s publications. Its now-discontinued magazine, Dabiq, takes its name from a hadith that claims that the final battle between the forces of Islam and the Crusaders will take place in Dabiq (northern Syria).

3 Counter-insurgency strategy with three distinct, yet interrelated phases. The first consists of “clearing” an area of insurgent forces. The second phase consists of operations, usually with the extensive use of local forces, to preserve peace and stability in the area and prevent insurgents from returning. The final phase refers to efforts aiming at infrastructure improvement and the establishment of political institutions that can secure the support of the civilian local population and long-term stability.

4 The concept of “Al-Wala Wal-Bara” is central in the Salafi discourse, roughly meaning loyalty to everything Allah loves and disavowal/dissociation from anything he disapproves. It is interpreted differently – more narrowly or more broadly – in different Salafi strands. In the IS discourse the “Al-Wala Wal-Bara” concept becomes all-encompassing.

5 For a comprehensive, regularly updated list of IS regulations see (al-Tamimi, 2015b)

6 This discrepancy can be merely evidence of IS administrative deficiency. Another interesting explanation asserts that instances of excessive zeal and harsher penalties can result from prior local tensions and animosity that encourage local IS members to act out of revenge (Al Aqeedi, 2016: 7).

7 Cited in (al-Shishani, 2014: 6). Interestingly, one of the main arguments the IS used against al-Qaeda, and the latter’s renewal of ba’ya to Mullah Omar was the Taliban’s effort to present themselves as responsible members of the international system, who are bound by its rules (Dabiq no.6, 2014: 24).

8 The IS has since lost control of Dabiq (October 2016). In anticipation of the loss of Dabiq, the IS decided to discontinue the publication of Dabiq magazine and replace it with Rumiyah.

9 Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has stated that “[the Islamic State] will not retreat from any spot of land to which it has expanded, and it will not diminish after enlarging.” Cited in (Bunzel, 2015: 26).

10 It is noteworthy that each interview with leaders of pro-IS groups across the region start with questions about their – geographic – “role” in the regional and global Caliphate project. See for example the interview with the amir of a Bengali pro-IS group, who manages to place Bangladesh within the caliphate project, although the historic caliphate never reached the area (Dabiq no.14, 2016: 63–64)
References


Towards an Islamic geopolitics

Reconciling the *Ummah* and territoriality in contemporary International Relations

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Introduction

The real or perceived presence of a dichotomy between Muslim-majority and non-Muslim societies – or *Dar-al-Islam* versus *Dar-al-Harb* – and its potential manifestation in a politics of exclusivity or violent conflict, has become one of the most familiar aspects of public discourse on the role of the Islamic faith in contemporary International Relations (IR) (Hashmi, 1996: 19; Mandaville, 2001: 136–139; Moses, 2006: 499; Simbar, 2008; Burgis, 2009: 68; Turner, 2012: 12). Yet in its core tenets, Islam is understood as boundless, non-territorial and opposed to political representation separate from the divine. The present chapter seeks to reconcile this tension in the Islamic intellectual tradition by examining the gradual redefinition and adaptation of spatial dualism by clerical and political elites that have occurred alongside the evolution of the modern post-colonial state, particularly in North Africa and the Middle East. It draws on two concepts, one introduced by the medieval Muslim geographers regarding the absence of literally defined borders between nations and the degrading of power projection across distances between capital cities and the premise of “geographical buffer spaces” developed by contemporary Iranian scholars of geopolitics, to identify variations in the definition of boundaries within and between Muslim and non-Muslim populations as manifest in physical territory. The first section examines the conceptual foundations of territoriality as historically conceived and defined within Islamic thought. The second section reviews the transformation of this idea across time from the first Muslim conquests to the emergence of Arab statehood in the mid-20th century and how it became manifest in the engagement of Islamic legal theory with the praxis of interstate relations. These definitions are applied in the third section in order to generate a theoretical framework for modern geopolitical analysis that integrates the territorial classification system produced by the Sunni (and, to a lesser extent, Shi’a) schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*madhhab*) with a model outlined by scholars affiliated with the Iranian Association of Geopolitics (IAG). Finally, the conclusion discusses the preliminary findings and considers the prospects for developing an applied geopolitical methodology that is logically compatible with Islamic interpretations of world order.
Conceptual foundations: space, place and territory in Islamic thought

The contemporary study of Islamic perspectives in IR has often been occupied by an internal contradiction. While the global role of Islam was originally defined by the classical Quranic conception of a borderless community of faith (Ummah) rather than the sovereign territorial state, at the same time the relationship between Muslim-majority and non-Muslim societies has historically been represented by Islamic jurists as a spatial construct or a division between contrasting zones or domains identified as the Abode of Submission or Oneness (Dar-al-Islam/Dar al-Tawhid) and the Abode of War or Unbelief (Dar-al-Harb/Dar-al-Kufr). In a heuristic sense, this premise invokes the mental analogy of a physical separation between two or more populations occupying geographic space, based on territorial boundaries as delimited by incumbent political authorities. This representation is substantiated by the definition of dar in Islamic international legal theory (siyar) as a territory or region or the portion of its constituent states that lie either within or beyond the administrative jurisdiction of the Shari’a (Bsoul, 2007: 74; Ahmad, 2008; Ayoub, 2012: 2). An account of the initial establishment of the Ummah through the forging of tribal alliances on the Arabian Peninsula by the Prophet Mohammed in the early 7th century also describes it as a proto-international system, which imposed a religious legal order (the Constitution of Medina) on a previously anarchic sub-region composed of warring chiefdoms (Moses, 2006: 495–496). In addition, the interpretation subsequently extended by Hanafi jurist Abu Bakr as-Sarakhsi in the 9th century suggests an analogy between these two realms and the opposition between hierarchy and anarchy in contemporary IR theory. This identifies an essential link between territory and security: the laws of God and the protection of both the faithful and non-Muslim minorities (dhimmi) – or, Pax Islamica – within the former and the absence of belief and chaos regardless of its rulers’ religion – or, the Hobbesian “state of nature” – in the latter (Ramadan, 1999: 125–126; Sabet, 2003: 179; Sheikh, 2003: 22; Abo-Kazleh, 2006: 43; Moses, 2006: 499–500; al-Dawoody, 2016: 107). According to classicists of the “First Debate,” the latter condition constituted an existential threat to the Daral-Islam that could only be eliminated through the conquest and conversion of the latter (jihad), which to the present day has been a subject of major contention as well as misrepresentation among scholars and practitioners of Islam alike (Masri, 1998: 156; Turner, 2012; al-Dawoody, 2016). The assumption of perpetual struggle between power-seeking forces comparable with classical realism also reflected the international context of that era, which was characterized by continued territorial challenges from opposing sheikhdoms as well as expansion by the neighbouring land-based (Roman, Persian, Mongol and Byzantine) empires (Abo-Kazleh, 2006; Turner, 2012: 15–16; al-Dawoody, 2016: 108–110). At the same time, the classical Shari’a did not prescribe rules governing relations between Muslim polities, as it forbade the existence of more than one Islamic state (Tadjbakhsh, 2010: 178).
And yet, present-day scholars commonly emphasize that this dichotomous construct has no direct roots either in the Quranic text or in the Sunnah and Hadith that together form the basis of Islamic jurisprudence (usul-al-fiqh) (Masri, 1998: 84,87; Sheikh, 2003: 22; Tadjbakhsh, 2010: 177; Hassan, 2012: 122). Rather, it is observed to have emerged in the centuries following the death of the Prophet, in which jurists (fuqaha) engaged in reasoned interpretation (ijtihad) of the revelations in order to accommodate the military expansion of the successive Rashidun (“Rightly Guided”), Umayyad and Abbasid calipha beyond the Arabian Peninsula that transpired from 622 to 1050 (Tibi, 1996:177; Masri, 1998:84–85; Rajaee, 1999: 3–4; Tadjbakhsh, 2010: 177–178). A critical case study of the origins of a “personal” versus “territorial” validity principle in siyar concludes that as the Dar al-Islam “is not represented by determined frontiers or clearly shaped territory” because of the challenge posed by Dar-al-Harb, its dimensions are in continual flux, and are therefore not subject to a separate form of international law akin to the Westphalian nation-state (Bouzenita, 2007: 43). Thus, this period was characterized by the increasing need to reconcile the religious sciences with the practical realities of exerting political authority over newly acquired territories, which confronted a larger non-Muslim world as well as emerging divisions – including both sectarian differences (Sunni/Shi’a) and four major episodes of civil strife (fitna) – within the societies in which Islam originated (Burgis, 2009: 66, 70; Tepas, 2009: 684). It was as a result of this altered situation that subsequent modifications of the initial binary vision of “abodes” were introduced. Additional categories were generated during the ensuing centuries as multiple readings of the canon, or “Second Debate” became highly contested among Sunni (Hanafi, Shafi, Hanbali and Maliki) and Shi’a (Zaidi and Jafari) mad’ahib, as well as between individual scholars (mujtahid) within them (Karabatak, 2014).

The Kufa, Iraq-based school led by Imam Abu Hanafa, introduced three essential criteria for the inclusion of a given territory within Dar-al-Islam, which may be usefully analogized with contemporary IR terminology: (1) security provision, or the preservation of peace among Muslim populations; (2) regime type, or rule by governments that provide legal protection for Muslims living within their administrative boundaries; and (3) direct contiguity, or a common frontier shared with another Muslim-majority territory (Abo-Kazleh, 2006: 42). Conversely, a territory originally included within the Dar-al-Islam might pass into the possession of the Dar-al-Harb assuming the presence of three conditions: (1) rule by governments and laws of unbelievers (zuhur ahkam al-kufr), (2) the absence of security guarantees for both Muslims and dhimmi and (3) direct contiguity with non-Muslim lands (Shoukri, 2011: 46; Ayoub, 2012: 4). The identification of security and threat perceptions embedded in a regional or territorial context therefore represents a considerable advance in Islamic juridical definitions during this period.

Yet, perhaps the most significant innovation introduced by the Hanafi jurists was a third space initially defined as the Abode of Pledge (Dar-al-Sulh), which relaxed the assumption of imminent warfare to allow for the conclusion of treaties of non-aggression between a non-Muslim territory and the caliphate and were rendered in several variants ranging from temporary to permanent (truce, covenant or treaty). These were developed as a means to address the question of how the Shari’a was to be applied to the diverse inhabitants of bordering territories or marchlands adjacent to the Dar-al-Islam, as well as non-contiguous or physically distant areas that had not
been exposed to Islam or had not been engaged in hostilities with the *Ummah* (Masri, 1998: 108, 367). Such conditions are also captured by the Abode of Disbelief (*D ar-al-Kufr*), which in the Shi’a Zaidiyah *madhab* is defined as those lands in which non-Islamic belief systems predominate, but are not necessarily antagonistic toward the *Dar-al-Islam* (Hassan, 2012: 121–122). These new dimensions also relied upon the premise of proximity, in that migration and habitation of Muslims beyond the *Dar-al-Islam* might be justified as long as it was feasible for them to return in the event that security conditions in the outlying lands deteriorated (Olsson, 2016). More important, it recognized that in contrast with the rigid conception of the *Ummah* as a singular or unitary space, Muslim societies could be disaggregated into enclaves that exist partly or entirely within the confines of non-Muslim lands or vice versa. The latter is exemplified historically by the establishment of the Byzantine/Rum and Frankish Crusader States on the boundaries of major Muslim cities in what is now Syria from the late 10th to mid-11th centuries and their alternation between periodic warfare and the negotiation of economic agreements during temporary truces (Takeo, 2000: 102–103). In the parlance of modern political geography, this might constitute a periphery or subregion of a unitary or federal state in which an ethnoreligious minority group is concentrated and shares a territorial boundary with a kin state that also affects its relationship with the central government.

The geopolitical significance of these advances is demonstrated by an early attempt to design a simple model of Islamic territoriality, which posits a correlation between the degree of change in boundaries between Muslim and non-Muslim domains and the presence or absence of dyadic conflicts. These include three conditions: (1) in which the attempted pursuit of territorial expansion by non-Muslim or secular forces reduces the area of the *Dar-al-Islam* by provoking the out-migration of its Muslim population (*hijra*), (2) the accretion of Muslim-majority territory through unopposed expansion of the *Dar-al-Islam* into non-Muslim or secular lands (*jihad*) and (3) an equilibrium state in which existing boundaries are preserved through a classical balance of power established by a formal peace treaty between Muslim and non-Muslim domains (known variously as *muwada’ah/mu’ahadah/mu’ahada* due to differing transliterations) (Parvin and Sommer, 1980: 5–7). However, this tripartite definition at the same time does not capture the more sophisticated taxonomy of territories eventually developed by jurists or the more complex configurations of Muslim and non-Muslim polities that evolved in the surrounding region during the medieval period. A particularly significant contribution to this process was the juridical opinion (*fatwa*) issued by Hanbali adherent Ibn Taymiyya at Mardin near what is now the Turkish–Syrian border, following the Mongol invasion and conquest of the Abbassid caliphate in 1258. The ambiguous political conditions fostered by the rule of a Muslim population by a secular but nominally Islamic occupying force necessitated the creation of a new territorial category: a city that was neither Muslim nor non-Muslim, described as the Abode of Compound (*Dar Murakkab*) (Hasan, 2015: 8, 23). Most significantly, this definition introduced the standard of identifying the characteristics of the inhabitants of a given geographic area as a criterion for the classification of territory in *fiqh*.

The final collapse of the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt in the early 16th century and the partition of former Arab lands between the Ottoman and Persian dynasties confirmed the separation of
foreign relations from religious doctrine, thus allowing for the existence of more than one Islamic state as well as recognition of a non-Islamic world order (Khadduri, 1959: 50; Parvin and Sommer, 1980: 14). However, it is further necessary to demonstrate the applicability of these seemingly anachronistic definitions to modern international politics. Such need is underscored by the prevalence of secularism and the absence of a literal basis in religion in the foreign relations of most Muslim-majority states, even among those that implement the Shari’a (Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran) in their domestic systems (al-Dawoody, 2016: 106). One appraisal of attempts to develop a relevant Islamic theory of IR suggests that despite the lack of distinction in the external behaviour of Muslim and non-Muslim states because of a prevailing anarchic or “self-help” system consisting of “like units,” the concept of group solidarity (assabiya), as represented by collective recognition of the five pillars of religious practice (witness, prayer, alms, fasting and pilgrimage), produces greater cohesion between Islamic societies than is assumed by realpolitik, thus constituting a subsystem within the larger international order (Moses, 2006: 498–499; Akram, 2007; Turner, 2009). In this view, Islam continues to be signified by an independently defined organizing principle of IR composed of an “inside,” or domestic space in which Islamic order predominates, versus “outside,” or the external non-Muslim international realm (Masri, 1998: 84,155; Sabet, 2003: 179; Turner, 2012: 15–16). However, the composition and location of the boundary between these constructs remain subjects of considerable dispute among a wide range of different actors, from clerics to national governments to terrorist organizations. Thus, the potential to draw empirical conclusions regarding the perceived role of geographic space in Islam necessarily lies in examining their patterns of confrontation and interface with the realities of the post-colonial state, particularly in Arab North Africa and the Middle East.
Space, place and faith: Islam and territoriality in Arab statehood

The contemporary relevance of the spatial problematique in Islam is therefore attested to by several conditions. First, the subdivided rendering of world order proposed by the mujtahid further contradicted the cosmopolitan conception of the Ummah, or the foundation of the Muslim polity in a community of faith rather than the territorial state governed by secular laws. Ultimately, the need to accommodate this inconsistency would emerge in 20th-century Islamic political thought as articulated by reformist Salafi intellectuals such as Maulana Maududi and Sayeed Qutb with the concept of governance (al-hakimiyyah), which posits that sovereignty is retained exclusively by God (Allah) but a political agency or viceregent (khalifa) should be established in order to administer the Shari’a within the territories inhabited by Muslims, outside of which rule by unbelievers or “ignorance of divine guidance” (al-jahiliyyah) prevails (Khan, 1995: 52–53; Khatab, 2002). According to this perspective, the paradigm of the European nation-state was superimposed over a religious collectivity, which did not recognize the basis of authority in popularly sanctioned national governments (Kelidar, 1993: 318–319; al-Barghouti, 2008). Thus, beginning with the withdrawal of the British and French Mandates from Mesopotamia (Iraq) and the Levant (Syria and Lebanon) from 1932 to 1946, followed by the Egyptian Revolution of 23 July 1952, this ostensibly produced an unresolved tension where the norm of territoriality was adopted by secular autocracies and radical nationalist regimes while at the same time often maintaining allegiances to indigenous sub-state bases of influence in order to buttress their rule. This contradictory pattern presumably introduced a current of endemic instability into Arab societies, in which traditional and/or Islamic identities have continually challenged the legitimacy of largely imported institutional forms (Joffe, 1994: 10). In recent decades, this dynamic has been regarded by various scholars as a prelude to popular mobilizations in which political Islam serves as a foundation for democratic transitions, as initially occurred in the 2010 Arab Awakening (ar-Rabi al-Arabi) in Tunisia and Egypt. Second, beginning with the 1948 Arab–Israeli War, it has paradoxically manifest itself in a proliferation of protracted territorial disputes among Muslim-majority states throughout the Middle East and North Africa, which has become a common characteristic of regional international politics since the mid-20th century. Third, the immediate significance of this puzzle is undeniably confirmed by the emergence of the profoundly revisionist Islamic State (ad-Dawlah al-Islamiyah) movement, which despite its origins in sub-national insurgent and terrorist networks extant to the 2003–2011 Iraq War and the subsequent Syrian civil conflict, has surpassed its predecessors by seizing on the conquest of territory through conventional warfare – including the appropriation of preexisting administrative units (waliyah) in both its “caliphate” and “overseas provinces” – as the fulcrum of its challenge to the international system (Jabareen, 2015; Zelin, 2016). Last, it speaks to ongoing
controversies regarding rights, representation and integration of Muslim minorities, whether
citizens, labour migrants or refugees, in geographies far removed from the “Islamic heartland” or
classical *Ummah*, such as Russia, Western Europe and North America (Shoukri, 2011; Olsson, 2016).

Despite its persistence, the normative and definitional tension discussed earlier has seldom if
ever been analysed from the perspective of contemporary geopolitics or the interaction of space,
place and boundaries with the practical conduct of foreign relations. A vast body of previous
literature, particularly in the post-9/11 context has focused upon the linkage between the
Muslim/non-Muslim dualism, traditionalist versus modern interpretations of “lesser” versus
“greater” struggle (*al-jihad alasghar/al-jihad al-akbar*), and doctrinal justifications for the use of
force in Islam (Abo-Kazleh, 2006; Rehmen, 2011: 32–43). In contrast, the present study seeks to
move beyond the confines of existing debates by developing an analytical framework that bridges
the subfields of Islamic and Middle East history with current approaches to geopolitical
modelling. Thus, in contrast with a recent study that rejects geographical definitions of *Dar-al-
Islam/Dar-al-Harb* in favour of the extent of freedom of Islamic legal practice (al-Dawoody, 2016:
106), the present approach seeks to specify the structure and function of spaces and populations
identified in the Sunni *fiqh* as an explanatory variable to be mapped to historical cases.
Towards an Islamic geopolitics: constructing an analytical framework

The main task that remains is to organize the assumptions regarding territoriality derived from Islamic and Middle East studies into a logically consistent template for geopolitical analysis. A preliminary basis for this interdisciplinary effort is presented by the writings of the medieval Muslim geographers, in particular the Baghdad-based Balkhi school of cartography and terrestrial mapping that emerged in the 8th century. The maps of the surrounding region displayed in prominent atlases composed during this period, such as Ibn Hawqal al-Baghdadi’s *Image of the Earth* (*Surat al-Ardh*), the anonymously authored *Limits of the World* (*Hudud al-’Alam*) and Muhammed al-Muqaddasi’s *Best Divisions in the Knowledge of the Regions* (*Aḥsan al-taqasim fi ma’rifat al-aqalim*) are demonstrative of the absence of demarcated political boundaries that separate states in early Islamic conceptions of world order (Parvin and Sommer, 1980:11–12; Brauer, 1995: 3; Eger, 2005: 5). The designation of the neighbouring lands (*buldan*) of Iraq, Syria and Fars, with parallel lines and boxes in these maps, suggests that the limits of sovereignty and national identity were not represented by explicitly drawn borders (Eger, 2015: 10). Rather, spaces between states were perhaps understood as “transition zones,” in which the ability to project sovereign power into peripheral areas as represented by instruments such as tax collection, postage or deployment of military forces declined gradually as physical distance increased from the urban core until it was replaced by a foreign sphere of influence (Brauer, 1995: 5–6). At most, spaces in between were designated by natural features such as mountains or trade routes marked with singular boundary posts. This condition is especially significant for its link to jurisprudence, as the lack of formal demarcation made it additionally difficult to determine the territorial limits of the Dar-al-Islam, and therefore, the legal status of mixed populations, as well as where the jurisdiction of the Shari’a terminated (Masri, 1998: 102). Such understandings of centre and periphery in the medieval Middle East are therefore analogous to the “loss-of-strength gradient,” or the impact of spatial proximity between states in Western IR and conflict studies (Boulding, 1962: 262; Bueno de Mesquita, 1981). With heed to more recent scholarship that warns against essentialist conclusions regarding a religiously based absence of boundary-making in early Arab societies (Brandell, 2006: 10), this is here understood as a standard of measurement for analysing the formation of buffer spaces, or zones of autonomy and accommodation between Muslim-majority and non-Muslim polities, as applied to the historical record.

An empirical extension of this view is provided by evidence from archaeological surveys conducted since the 1990s that challenge the traditional notion of the frontier as an empty hinterland or wilderness area, as initially conceived by late 19th-century American geographers, such as Frederick J. Turner. In particular, socio-economic interactions such as mixed settlement patterns, shared architectural designs and pastoral transhumance between the caliphates and the
Byzantine Empire from the 7th to 10th centuries serve to challenge the popular notion of the Islamic frontier (thughur) as a front line of raids, military campaigns (offensive jihad) and captured fortresses that sought to extend Muslim civilization into depopulated Christian lands (Eger, 2005, 2015: 1–22).

Thus, the delineation of Muslim/non-Muslim boundaries is perhaps more fruitfully understood as a process of gradual redefinition that has occurred in tandem with the evolution of the modern territorial state. An example is provided by recent theoretical contributions of Iranian scholars of geopolitics that seek to extend the established literature on “buffer states” by introducing a more systematic definition of geographic spaces located between two or more rival regional or global powers (Hafeznia et al., 2013). A buffer space is here defined as a territory that possesses both an independent or autonomous status and a neutral orientation, which is recognized by a unilateral or bilateral diplomatic agreement that physically separates these powers by making their borders mutually inaccessible. Referencing the significant finding in previous IR research that contiguity fosters “interaction opportunities” increasing the probability of interstate disputes, their median situation counteracts the power projection capabilities of rival states, therefore forcing accommodation and reducing the likelihood or intensity of conflict (Hafeznia et al., 2013: 6–7; Starr, 2013: 40–50). The resulting model is divided into four main components: (1) the structure of buffer spaces as indicated by location and content; (2) the functional characteristics of buffer spaces in both external (international) and internal (domestic) dimensions, the latter of which is subdivided into government and societal levels; (3) the process through which buffer spaces are formed or collapse, as indicated by driving forces and manner; and (4) factors that precipitate change in the condition of buffer spaces in relation to surrounding powers. While at first glance the assumption of inherent rivalry and competition between powers within the model may seem to reproduce a primitive “zero-sum” logic (in which a buffer serves to delay rather than prevent conflict) as found in both classical realism and early Islam, it is here assumed that the development of buffer spaces subsumes both the traditionalist notion of continual jihad between Muslim and non-Muslim states and the subsequent adaptation of this dualism by Islamic jurists discussed earlier.

However, while the empirical interrogations pursued by Sunni legal scholars (mujtahid) produced an additional four-part typology of buffer spaces or intermediate zones, the definitions of these categories are essentially descriptive and are thus often conflated or used interchangeably in the secondary literature. Therefore, in order to move beyond descriptive taxonomies towards the construction of explanatory frameworks, it is necessary to identify causal relationships that link the designated function of territory in Islam, on the left hand, and the nature of interaction between spatial units, on the right.

The typologies displayed in Tables 12.1 and 12.2 rank each territorial type according to the associated level of accommodation established between Muslim

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**Table 12.1** Typology of territory and international Muslim/non-Muslim relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Territory</th>
<th>External Function of Buffer Space (International Level)</th>
<th>Level of Accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Territory</th>
<th>Internal Function of Buffer Space (Government Level)</th>
<th>Level of Accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abode of Protection (Dar-al-Dhimmah)</td>
<td>Territory in which a majority non-Muslim population is governed by Muslim authorities</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abode of Justice (Dar-al-Adl)</td>
<td>Non-Muslim territory in which existing laws provide security for Muslims, making it desirable for emigration</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abode of Safety (Dar-al-Amn)</td>
<td>Non-Muslim territory in which resident Muslims are afforded legal rights to practice their faith despite absence of Shari’a</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abode of Misguided Innovation or Heresy (DarAl-Bid’ah)</td>
<td>Territory in which Muslim authorities engage in alteration or fabrication of the Sunnah or Hadith for expedient political purposes</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abode of False Worship (Dar-al-Shirk)</td>
<td>Territory in which superficial trappings of Islam are promoted by authorities alongside non-Islamic culture and practices</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abode of Disbelief</td>
<td>Territory in which non-Muslim belief systems predominate, but are not hostile towards the Dar-al-                                                                -----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12.2 Typology of territory and domestic Muslim/non-Muslim relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Territory</th>
<th>Internal Function of Buffer Space (Government Level)</th>
<th>Level of Accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abode of Mutual Peace (Dar-al-Muwada’ah)</td>
<td>Non-Muslim territory that has concluded a formal treaty of alliance establishing a balance of power with Muslim governors</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abode of Covenant (Dar-al-Adh)</td>
<td>Non-Muslim territory that has concluded a diplomatic agreement with Muslim governors for protection of its Muslim inhabitants</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abode of Pledge (Dar-al-Sulh)</td>
<td>Non-Muslim territory that has concluded a diplomatic agreement or treaty that ordains reparations with Muslim governors</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abode of Calm (Dar-al-Hudna)</td>
<td>Non-Muslim territory that has concluded a temporary truce due to stalemate that delays warfare for a specified period (ten years) and requires payment of tribute to Muslim governors</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abode of Pillaged Land (Dor al-Maslubah)</td>
<td>Territory formerly inhabited by Muslims and governed by the Shari’a that has become occupied or colonized by non-Muslim forces</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abode of Subjugation and Overpowering (Dar-al-Qahr wa Ghalabd)</td>
<td>Muslim territory that has been invaded and conquered by a non-Muslim power in which Islam is suppressed</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and non-Muslim polities, thus converting them into ordinal-level indexes. This is intended to generate the equivalent of *dyads* or pairs of states as a unit of analysis in data collections used in contemporary international conflict studies, such as the University of Michigan Correlates of War Militarized Interstate Disputes project. Together these tables capture the external and internal dimensions in the second component of the buffer space model defined previously.

The data in each table are organized in three columns: the first contains the type of territory in English and Modern Standard Arabic as traditionally identified in the Islamic legal literature, the second details its practical function as a buffer space in relations between Muslim and non-Muslim territories and the third assigns a numeral denoting the estimated level of accommodation resulting from this relationship. The logical justification for the rankings of each category is explicated as follows.

At the international level of analysis, the Abode of Subjugation and Overpowering (*Dar-al-Qahr wa Ghalaba*) represents the military conquest of Muslim-majority lands by secular or non-Muslim forces and direct suppression of Islamic practice and therefore the complete absence of interaction. Yet, the next level, Abode of Pillaged Land (*Dar Al-Maslubah*), denotes an incrementally different condition, or a territory formerly inhabited by Muslims living under the Shari’ā that has been colonized by a non-Muslim power, which increases the likelihood of highly contested relations, (such as an anti-colonial movement or insurgency). The possibility of bargaining behaviour is introduced within the Abode of Calm (*Daral-Hudna*), or disputed lands designated by a truce (rather than a “cease-fire”) because of a mutually hurting stalemate, which includes a negotiated date of expiration until which defrayal is paid to the Muslim combatant. As the primary transition point from the classical to the medieval period of Sunni scholarship, the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Territory</th>
<th>Internal Function of Buffer Space (Government Level)</th>
<th>Level of Accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abode of Emigrants (<em>Dar-cd-Muhajirin</em>)</td>
<td>Non-Muslim territory to which Muslims have migrated in order to engage in economic activities</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abode of Migration (<em>Dar-al-Hijrah</em>)</td>
<td>Territory in which Muslim population has migrated from non-Muslim lands</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abode of Apostasy (<em>Dar al-Riddah</em>)</td>
<td>Territory in which a Muslim population has converted from Islam to another religion or established an authority hostile towards Islam</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abode of Usurpation (<em>Dar al-Baghy</em>)</td>
<td>Territory that has experienced rebellion against legitimate Muslim authority and its replacement by heretical forces</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abode of Call to Islam (<em>Dar-al-Daw 'ah</em>)</td>
<td>Territory in which population has newly converted to Islam or Islamic practice has recently been introduced</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abode of Ignorance (<em>Dar-al-Jalalat</em>)</td>
<td>Territory in which population has not been exposed to or is unaware of Islam</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abode of Pledge (Dar-al-Sulh), constitutes a far more advanced degree of engagement, resulting in the conclusion of a diplomatic agreement or treaty that mandates reparations or compensation for wartime damages to Muslim rulers. The qualitative distinction between this arrangement and the Abode of Covenant (Dar-al-Adh) lies in the formal proviso for protection of Muslim populations within a non-Muslim territory. Finally, the highest level of negotiated settlement is constituted in the Abode of Mutual Peace (Dar al-Muwada’ah), or a non-Muslim territory that has concluded a treaty of alliance with Muslims that is afforded permanent legal status, which seeks to establish parity in capabilities between its signatories.

The domestic dimension of Muslim/non-Muslim interactions begins at the governmental level. A nominal condition exists within the Abode of Disbelief (Daral-Kufr), in which non-Islamic legal systems predominate but are not necessarily antagonistic towards the Dar-al-Islam. The Abode of False Worship (Dar-al-Shirk) designates a territory in which a government adopts and promotes the imagery or symbols of Islam while maintaining non-Islamic culture and practices (a strategy historically pursued by various secular Arab nationalist regimes to promote popular legitimacy), which may increase opportunities for hostile interactions with non-Muslim states. In the Abode of Misguided Innovation or Heresy (Dar Al-Bid’ah), while Muslim rulers remain incumbent, they engage in alteration or reform of Islamic laws and practices for expedient political purposes, which may elicit a greater degree of bargaining with non-Muslim powers despite hostilities. A significantly different condition exists within the Abode of Safety (Dar-al-Amn), where Muslims already residing within a non-Muslim territory are granted legal rights of religious practice despite a lack of official recognition of the Shari’a. However, the Abode of Justice (Dar-al-Adl) describes a higher stage of accommodation, in which existing laws provide security guarantees for Muslims, therefore making it desirable for permanent emigration from beyond its borders. The greatest potential for cooperative interaction is produced by the Abode of Protection (Dar-al-Dhimmah), or a territory where a non-Muslim majority population is administered by a Muslim political elite that enjoys popular legitimacy due to the successful civil integration of its inhabitants.

Finally, at the societal level, changes in the religious characteristics of a population, or population exchanges between territories of differing confessional compositions are also assumed to impact the level of accommodation between polities. At the bottom of the index, the absence of knowledge of Islam within a territory determines that interactions are not based on religious difference, producing a null effect. The rapid introduction of or mass conversion to the Muslim faith within the Abode of Call to Islam (Dar-al-Daw’ah) may result in possible tensions with a non-Muslim power. However, the Abode of Apostasy (Dar al-Riddah), in which a Muslim population has converted from Islam to another religion or established an authority hostile towards Islam, may foster increased opportunities for cooperation with non-Muslim polities with which it had previous disputes. In contrast, in the Abode of Usurpation (Dar Al-Baghy) in which an armed revolt has replaced established authorities with “heretical” governors, the legitimacy of Muslim rule is inherently contested between displaced leaders and the new regime, thus linking civil conflict in one state with potential changes in the intensity of interstate disputes. The Abode of Emigrants (Dar-al-Muhajirin) in which Muslim populations are motivated by attractive
economic conditions to relocate temporarily for purposes of labour activity, may evolve into a hub of trade and commerce between non-Muslim and Muslim-majority states. Finally, the Abode of Migration (Dar-al-Hijrah) in which beneficent societal conditions in non-Muslim lands serve as an attractant to Muslim populations to seek permanent residence or citizenship, represents the highest degree of mutual accommodation between religiously heterogeneous states.

The conversion of these categorical definitions into gradated indexes thus addresses the conceptual tension between Islamic religious tenets and political practice discussed earlier. Rather than resting upon the assumption of a fundamental incongruity between Islam and the projection of political authority over territory, it posits that buffer spaces are often consciously constructed by elites for the purposes of administering and managing religious conflict and cooperation within and between states.
Conclusion

The question of reconciling opposing conceptions of space and territory in Islamic studies and Middle East history remains underexamined within the evolving research agenda in Islamic IR theory. The present chapter has sought to contribute to this innovation by proposing a tentative foundation for an Islamic method of geopolitical analysis, which reconciles the competing interpretations regarding territoriality within and between the Sunni and Shi’a mad’hahib with contemporary theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of international conflict. This research agenda sets two primary tasks for future endeavours in developing an Islamic geopolitics. First, while it presents an initial effort to integrate the logic and practice of *ijtihad* in the Islamic religious sciences with the empiricism of modern social science, more intensive research using primary sources in the Islamic literature is needed to ensure the accuracy of interpretation, particularly in anticipating criticism by traditionalist scholars, and to refine interdisciplinary efforts. Second, it is necessary to further test and demonstrate the validity and explanatory power of the model and its measures through application to a larger number of historical cases, in order to accumulate novel evidence and findings. Finally, it is imperative to present to both scholarly and non-academic audiences how an Islamic geopolitical method can usefully address present-day policy issues and controversies in interactions between the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds, as well as classical historical questions.
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