



*Worlding Beyond the West*

# **ISLAM IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**POLITICS AND PARADIGMS**

Edited by  
Nassef Manabilang Adiong,  
Raffaele Mauriello and Deina Abdelkader

**ROUTLEDGE**  


# 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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## **Worlding Beyond the West**

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# **Islam in International Relations**

Politics and Paradigms

**Edited by Nassef Manabilang  
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- 2 Panels at the 13th IR conference of the Middle East Technical University held on 25–27 June 2014 in Ankara, Turkey.
- 3 Panel on “Islamic Perspectives on Theory and Praxis in IR” at the 4th World Congress for Middle Eastern Studies held on 18–22 August 2014 in Ankara, Turkey.
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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 “ethnophilosophies.” 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 [ . . . ]

(<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/01/2013114142638797542.html>)



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.<sup>1</sup>

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

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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup> 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 Association<sup>4</sup> 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,"<sup>5</sup> "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 transnational 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<sup>6</sup> 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<sup>7</sup> 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 *jahiliyah* (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).

Either before or in the same years as the publication of *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, some other important books and articles came out which is worth mentioning because of their pioneering role: N. Armanazi (1929) *Les principes islamiques et les rapports internationaux en temps de paix et de guerre* (Paris); M. Hamidullah (1935) *Document sur la diplomatie musulmane à l'époque du prophète et des khalifes orthodoxes*, (Paris); A. Rechid (1937) "L'Islam et le droit des gens," *Académie de Droit International, Recueil des Cours*, Vol. II, pp. 375–504; E. Rabbath (1950) "Pour une théorie du droit international musulman," *Revue Egyptienne de Droit International*, Vol. VI; H. Kruse (1955) "The Foundation of Islamic International Jurisprudence," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, Vol. III; and M. Khadduri (1956) "Islam and the Modern Law of Nations," *American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 50, pp. 358–372.

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."<sup>8</sup> 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, Sheikh 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, world-wide 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 Adraoui 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 Petit 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, Herndon (Virginia, U.S.) 1997.

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