Re-thinking Contemporary International Relations (IR) in Islam

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Abstract:
The organising principle of international relations (IR) in Islam is distinguished by two approaches. Firstly, the conflict-oriented traditionalist view that divides the world into *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-harb* that incorporates *qitāl* or fight into its theory of foreign relations between states, the rule of law and security of Muslims; and also *da'wah* as a core responsibility of the Islamic state. Secondly, the pacifist or non-traditional view of the realist one world or *dār al-'ahd* where Muslim countries enter into covenants and have diplomatic ties with non-Muslim countries, build military power with restricted conditions for its use; and facilitate *da'wah* through peaceful and cooperative relations. This paper will argue that the two approaches in relation to the organising principle of IR in Islam i.e. the division of *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-harb*; and *dār al-'ahd* have commonalities with the neo-realist and neo-liberal approaches of conventional IR theory and can also acquire sophistication from constructivism and other alternative approaches. It will also argue that with a more nuanced interpretation of IR theory in

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Islam, the behaviour of states and non-state Muslim actors will be better accounted for as a descriptive and normative exercise.

Introduction: Re-thinking the boundaries of Muslim political community

The link between state and politics has dominated our political imaginations long before IR became an autonomous sphere of activity. It was assumed that what we meant by "international relations" were really relations between state governments, which according to the modern ideal of the nation-state, were supposedly representative of their constitutive nations.[1] States have been the purveyors of globalisation for the past four centuries due to war and capitalism—from the "nation in arms" of the French Revolution to the expansion of European global empires and subsequent third-world nationalist movements that led to decolonisation. The transforming nature of the political community and challenge to national citizenship as a result of globalisation and ethnic fragmentation point out to arguments for cosmopolitan democracy or world citizenship as well as neo-medievalist approaches for the former, and acknowledgement of cultural differences for the latter. They both allude to external and internal processes that dispute a purely realist/neo-realist understanding of international politics and the relationship within and between political communities, and the extension of human sympathy and sense of moral duty beyond the solidarity of the nation-state.[2]

1. P. Mandaville, *Global Political Islam* (London: Routledge, 2006), 6.
2. A. Linklater, "Globalisation and the Transformation of the Political

This also naturally leads to discussions of a contemporary world order in the imagery of globalisation, already looked into by the multifarious aspects of ethnicity, identity, peacekeeping, humanitarian intervention, regionalism, democratisation, the environment, financial instability, social movements and terrorism among others that are now interdependent and integrated, emphasising international and transnational connections. Such discussions modify traditional models of order based on balance of power, the international system and collective security into an international order of globalised states. Globalisation itself becomes a process of state transformation and functionality together with international organisations, non-governmental and trans-national actors as a global network in a transforming international order itself.[3]

The re-conceptualisation of IR is such that "the political" is not conceived as a set of practices which pertains only to relations between given actors within specific territorial units, but instead as a space of interaction situated across many territories—whose interaction is *constitutive of new political identities*. It is when the link of globalisation and political science is viewed in this way that translocal politics begin to emerge.[4]

As such, IR theory will gain from engaging inter-disciplinary research in the social sciences pertaining to the political as primarily a social activity that involves the construction and allegiance to an identity; and ethical claims which through encounters with "the other" generate new political identities. The socio-political interaction in

Community," in *The Globalisation of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, ed. J. Bayliss and S. Smith, 3d edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

3.   I. Clark, "Globalisation and the Post-Cold War World Order," in *The Globalisation of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations,* ed. J. Bayliss and S. Smith, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

4.   Mandaville, *Global*, 49.

the contested space of this social activity between bounded communities is referred to as *translocality*, which apart from multiculturalism and migration as its modes, also goes beyond people and institutions, where its other mode is as an abstract notion of how ideas and theories move, or indeed, travel and change through space which is accelerated by the information and communication technology revolution. In this sense, a political community is made up of its set of ethical claims, in this case Islam, and its identity i.e. Muslims.[5]

Travel here refers to the "travelling theory" of Islam that goes through perpetual critical discourse, of which Edward Said identifies four stages being (1) the point of origin; (2) the actual travelling of a theory or idea into a different time and space through a medium, be it intellectuals, migrant communities, publications and electronic media; (3) conditions that mediate the acceptance, rejection or modification of a theory or idea referring to both "other" and competing interpretations of "Muslim other" communities; and (4) the transformed idea or theory itself that may travel yet again given different conditions. As such, Islam in Muslim countries is acculturated as an authoritative and authentic identity and practice in different times and places yet possess an almost immediate otherness in globalisation with its accelerated or hyper-translocality.[6]

The organising principle of international relations (IR) in Islam is usually distinguished by two approaches. Firstly, the conflict-oriented traditionalist view that divides the world into *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb* that incorporates *qitāl* or fight into its theory of foreign relations between states, the rule of law and security of Muslims; and also *daʿwah* as a core responsibility of the Islamic state. Secondly, the pacifist or non-traditional

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5. Ibid., 9–14.
6. E. Said, "Travelling Theory," *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

view of the realist one world or *dār al-ʿahd* where Muslim countries enter into covenants and have diplomatic ties with non-Muslim countries, build military power with restricted conditions for its use; and facilitate *daʿwah* through peaceful and cooperative relations.[7] The Muslim political community's discourse of Islam as a matter of identity and ethical claim intertwine Islamic politics and the politics of Islam as an internal condition and theory of state or governance where ". . . Islamic politics by necessity if not by definition incorpo rates politics of Islam. Risk and intrigue, however, emanate from the fact that the opposite does not necessarily hold true."[8] This overflows to the external condition i.e. IR of Muslim countries as it connects both to the imperatives of religious values for a novel approach conscious of the forces of globalisation. This problematises the boundaries of the trans-national Muslim political community i.e. the *ummah*, the state and the internal schisms as they generate competing ethical claims on Islam on grounds of authenticity, authority and representation. By canvassing current Muslim affairs under the rubric of translocality, re-visiting approaches to IR in Islam in light of global Muslim politics, and discussing the credibility of "post-Islamism" and a neo-classical Muslim paradigm of nations, this paper hopes to suggest pertinent areas of discourse concerning globalisation and the future of Muslim politics this century.

The organising principle of IR and global Muslim politics

> The *dār al-Islām* accepted the state of peace rather than the state of war as the permanent basis of

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7. M. Abo-Kazleh, "Rethinking International Relations Theory in Islam: Toward a More Adequate Approach," *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of IR* 5, no. 4 (2006): 41–56.
8. Amr G. Sabet, *Islam and the Political* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 1.

its relationship with the *dār al-ḥarb*. This radical departure from the classical doctrine occurred in the sixteenth century when Muslim rulers agreed to deal with Christian princes on the basis of reciprocity and mutual interest.[9]

Majid Khadduri was referring to the historical context of legal theory in relation to changes in the concepts of the *siyar* or the Islamic law of nations as the Islamic state evolved from the city-state (622–632), imperial (632–750), universal (750–circa 900), decentralised (900–circa 1500), fragmented (1500–1918) to sovereign states (1918–present) in the modern community of nations.[10]

Accordingly, contemporary scholarship on IR theory in Islam has had to reconcile the transformation of its political community with changes in the concepts of the *siyar* laid down by al-Shaybānī (750–804) who himself lived during a period when the Islamic state was also accommodating territorial limitations of its expansion and co-existence with non-Muslims. Concerns for the need of an adequate framework of analysis for the study of IR in Islam has led to an emphasis on the originally temporary division of *dār al-ṣulḥ* (territory of peaceful arrangement/tension) or *dār al-ʿahd* (territory of covenant/peace) espoused by Shāfiʿī jurists as a permanent state or the organising principle of IR. This is in place of the traditional division of the world in domains of peace and war

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9. M. Khadduri, *The Islamic Law of Nations: Shaybani's Siyar* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), 22.

10. The deal above refers to the capitulation treaty of 1535/1536 between Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent of the Osmanli Caliphate and King Francis I of France. On top of viewing the signatories as equal partners with mutual interests, granting individual and religious freedom, as well as allowing French subjects to be judged by French laws in civil and criminal matters in the Caliphate, the treaty is known to have modified the classical principles of the *siyar* in relation to the duration of peace which extended beyond ten years, exempting poll tax for French subjects in the Osmanli Caliphate beyond one year, and also the adoption of territorial sovereignty in place of the universal Islamic state.

with *qitāl* or fight as the organising principle arguing that this traditional division was not divine or theological but legal i.e. based on *ijtihād*, therefore, changeable. It still encourages power building mitigated by conditions on the use of force as a pacifist approach to armed conflict, with war as a self-defence option when Muslim lives and properties are attacked and their land is occupied.[11] While helpful as a descriptive framework of the actual behaviour of Muslim countries in the community of nations as realpolitik, there is also the view that a neo-classical Islamic framework is required. This is to account for the relationship between norms and values in relation to interests and interaction that ultimately maintains the traditional division of the world into domains of peace and war given the experience of colonialism and neo-colonialism in relation to hegemonic advocacy of democracy, human rights, and liberalism that are imposed by political, economic and military powers.[12]

The dominant Western realist traditions in IR of Thucydides, Machiavelli, Rousseau, Hugo Grotius, Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, and Mearsheimer around the overlapping considerations of: (1) the causes and justifications of war and the conditions of peace, war and order; (2) power and position as an/the essential actor (unit of analysis) in the community of nations; (3) conceptions and images of the international system and the role of the state in that system continue to dominate with neo-realism where power politics remains as the dominant policy paradigm for academics, foreign policy decision-makers and military strategists as it gives insight into power, politics and survival. Conversely, neo-liberalism institutionalism with its focus on cooperation, institutions and regimes explain the impact of economic interdependence on states as well as the effects of

11. Abo-Kazleh, "Rethinking International Relations."
12. Sabet, *Islam*, 151.

institutions and regimes. Together, neo-realism and neo-liberalism illustrate the status quo of international politics and its continuity at the expense of a complete view of human relations, the state, and international relations. This can be seen despite globalisation as assumptions of post-war international order together with the core values of globalisation (capitalism and consumerism) and neo-liberal ideals of human rights, the environment and social justice are seen as being driven by Western hegemony. There is no complete theory. Neo-realism reduces the importance of culture, traditions and identity that were factors that transformed the Soviet empire's political community which was why it failed, for instance, to explain the end of the cold war.[13]

As I will explain shortly, mainstream approaches in IR despite its pragmatism and critical utility as a stand-alone kit, may simply explain Muslim countries in relation to their identities and ethical claims as political communities of the politics of religion i.e. Islam. In light of criticisms by constructivism and other alternative approaches to international theory such as postmodernism and post-colonialism, the necessity of a contemporary IR theory and framework in Islam that synthesises mainstream and alternative approaches to analyse Muslim countries and communities beyond the nation-state in relation to their identities and ethical claims as political communities of Islamic politics is required to offset the status quo of international politics' analysis. The realist lens patently exposes the plurality and contestations of Muslim countries as a combination of the politics of religion and power-politics in general.

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13. Holsti in Sabet, *Islam*, 129; and T. Dunne and B. C. Schmidt, "Realism," in *The Globalisation of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations*, ed. Bayliss and Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 166.

The nexus of globalisation and political practice as an interactive space is in making it possible to facilitate a public space for critical Islam through the re-conceptualisation and transformation of the Muslim political communities to the *ummah* as a trans-national socio-political reality and not a utopian category in the new century. Whether in reference to the halcyonic unity of the Madinah city-state or the Pan-Islamic idealism of the colonial period, the concept of the *ummah* in a global age remains in flux as its plurality and contestations are brought to the fore instantaneously in the void of trans-national and international leadership. When we mention Muslim politics in an age of nation-states, we really are referring to a history of problematic compromise and conflict of Muslim political communities with its ethical claims in the context of power politics that gave birth to difficult, problematic and usually unhelpful terms such as "Islamism" in mainstream political analysis i.e. a self-serving and unhistorical concept that is a product of American/Western academic hegemony in their attempts to explain events such as the Iranian Islamic Revolution and September 11, and subsequently, generalise and reduces all forms of Islamic activism into the Islamist typology of political, missionary and jihadi as attempts to reconcile tradition with modernity. In the context of the nation-state as a secular entity, Islamism is defined as a set of ideologies which holds that Islam is both religion and political system—in the sense of a state whose governmental principles and institutions derive directly from the *shariʿah* yet conveniently discounts apolitical and secular Islam as an even more unlikely category.[14] There is an urgent need on the part of especially Muslim social scientists to reconstruct and apply the Islamic cultural-political ethos with a third alternative beyond the polarity of traditional-modern, or extremist-

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14. "Understanding Islamism," *International Crisis Group*, 2 May 2005, at http://www.crisisgroup.org (accessed 1 July 2009).

moderate divides and develop a more nuanced generic and specific classification of Muslim sub-types and nomenclature to neutrally describe its plurality and contestations in the context of both comparative politics and IR. This urgency is heightened at present by the aftermath of the Arab Spring, as the debate over the role of Islam in public life is renewed, especially with the recent victory of Ennahda or *Al-Nahḍah* in the Tunisian Constituent Assembly Election.

The collapse of the Usmanli Caliphate and anti-colonialism led to a debate on the approaches to independence—a renewed Caliphate or the nation-state that led scholarly debates on the matter by the likes of Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, ʿAlī ʿAbdel Razīq, Syed Abul Aʿlā Maudūdi and Ḥassan al-Banna, the inter-play between Islam and secular nationalism in countries such as Turkey, Egypt and Pakistan, and presently, identity politics in Muslim countries. This is in the form of Islam as trans-national social-cum- political movement with the example of the Muslim Brotherhood and national-based Islamic political parties and civil society groups, Islam as missionary or *daʿwah* movement in the form of the *Tablighi Jamaat* and the *Ḥezbollah* as a jihadi group, as well as state-led Islamisation efforts for national development and religious legitimacy e.g. Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, respectively, the revolution and leadership of the *wilāyat al-faqīh* in Iran, and also religious groups emerging in the scenario of war, civil conflict or failed states. Globalisation has also facilitated new forms of trans-nationalism in the form of diasporic and migrant communities, internet forums and networks such as Al-Qaeda. It is important to consider the geo-political context in which all of these occur, where Islam as identity politics was initially in the context of anti-colonialism, and then the yoke of the Cold War and superpower patronage. The Islamic revolution in Iran became inspirational in the context of the latter as a non-Western order while Afghanistan

became enmeshed in the Cold War and subsequently its own civil war after the withdrawal of the USSR in 1989, and the emergence of trans-national militant activism thereafter. The collapse of the USSR also led to the creation of Muslim majority states in Central Asia as its fallout e.g. Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. At the same time, Islam as identity politics also became a feature of regional and national politics, civil wars and territorial conflicts, mobilised both through militancy and civil society activities such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine, and issues of the Islamic state in Sudan and the *sharīʿah* in Nigeria, and successful participation in the political process e.g. HAMAS in 2006, and also successful participation and subsequent conflict with the state e.g. FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) in Algeria in 1991, and the AKP (Justice and Development Party) in Turkey in 2002 onwards.

As mentioned earlier, trans-nationalism, which may be referred to as a broad range of social formations and exchanges that are structured across borders but without necessarily a leading role for sovereign governments, is an essential concept in understanding the universal ethical claims of Islam as well as its history prior to the age of nation-states. Islam's expansion as a political community from Arabia into various parts of the world sustained a world-system of trade and academic networks along with the activities of the *ʿulamāʾ* and *ṣūfī ṭarīqah*. As a response to the decline of Islamic civilisation, modern Muslim trans-nationalism may be traced back to revivalist movements of Shah Waliyullah and Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb and the pan-Islamic ideas of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghāni. With the abolition of the caliphate in 1924, the idea of trans-national political unity declined despite its attempted revival by the likes of *Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr*, pan-Islamic feelings in light of the Six-Day War in 1967, the oil shock of 1974 and Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979.

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Presently, trans-national Islam is commonly associated with inter-governmental bodies such as the OIC (Organisation of Islamic Conference) where state interests dominate despite its platform for pan-Islamic unity, and also state sponsored initiatives such as the Muslim World League. In addition to (1) inter-governmental organisations and (2) state-sponsored initiatives mentioned above, a typology of Muslim trans-nationalism may also include (3) *Ṣūfī* and pietistic networks as the traditional form e.g. *Tablighi Jamaat*, Naqshbandi; (4) broad-based Islamic activism ideologies e.g. Muslim Brotherhood which has an international coordinating body in the *al-tanẓīm al-ʿālamī*, and has led to offshoots of prominent Islamic political parties with the likes of HAMAS in Palestine, *al-Nahḍah* in Tunisia and the National Islamic Front in Sudan; (5) NGOs in the form of charities, *daʿwah* groups and advocacy networks that include organisations such as Muslim Aid, Muslim World League and World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), Women Living Under Muslim Law (WLUML); (6) the political significance of the *Ḥajj* through its symbolism, the relationship between Muslim nations pertaining to its management and the *Ḥajj* as a socio-political and economic platform for lobbying foreign policy objectives and trans-national social mobilisation and networking, and also in facilitating business interests where it is the second biggest source of revenue after oil for Saudi Arabia; (7) the assimilative, pluralist and inter-generational experiences and issues of Muslim migrant communities in different countries in Europe as well as being affected by wider Muslim issues in world politics such as September 11, the occupation of Palestine and Iraq, and incommensurable cultural and values related controversies such as the Danish Cartoon Affair in 2006 and the *ḥijāb* in France;[15] and lastly, globalisation itself as medium, purveyor

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15. Mandaville, *Global*, 49–92 and 275–301.

and space for trans-national Islam i.e. (8) the virtual *ummah* of the new media with the pluralistic understanding of Islam in the internet and consumer driven religious programming, and the resultant dispersion of religious authority.

Several features of global Muslim politics that may be garnered are (1) a new global consciousness and re-imagining of the *ummah* in Muslim communities concerning unity as well a new politics of critical Islam in light of the dispersion of religious authority; (2) pluralism of Islamic discourse with access to different voices and interpretations of Islam where the centre and periphery of the Muslim world collapses; and (3) difficulty in regulating Islamic activism and discourse by the state. These features mean that Islam as identity politics requires contemporary scholarship on IR theory to produce an adequate and corresponding framework of analysis.

Globalised states and the Muslim political community

A pragmatic approach to both globalisation and fragmentation is the neo-medieval model of world order, where the political community is ideally governed by overlapping authorities where the state transfers some of its powers to international institutions to facilitate global issues, and also regions within the state to address local, often cultural politics in a three tiered governance i.e. state, sub-state and trans-national authorities. Yet, the caveat of any political community is that it may generate domination and exclusion of certain segments of society, sometimes in the form of identity and normative politics e.g. Islam and the other.[16] Parag Khanna describes at length today's similarities with the middle-ages and how we are really in the thick of a transformative process in becoming the post-cold war world order:

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16. Linklater, "Globalisation," 709–726.

The state isn't a universally representative phenomenon today, if it ever was. Already, billions of people live in imperial conglomerates such as the European Union, the Greater Chinese Co-Prosperity Sphere, and the emerging North American Union, where state capitalism has become the norm. But at least half the United Nations' membership, about 100 countries, can hardly be considered responsible sovereigns. Billions live unsure of who their true rulers are, whether local feudal lords or distant corporate executives. In Egypt and India, democratic elections have devolved into auctions. Delivering security and providing welfare aren't just campaign promises; they *are* the campaign. The fragmentation of societies from within is clear: From Bogotá to Bangalore, gated communities with private security are on the rise. This diffuse, fractured world will be run more by cities and city-states than countries. Once, Venice and Bruges formed an axis that spurred commercial expansion across Eurasia. Today, just 40 city-regions account for two thirds of the world economy and 90 percent of its innovation. The mighty Hanseatic League, a constellation of well-armed North and Baltic Sea trading hubs in the late Middle Ages, will be reborn as cities such as Hamburg and Dubai form commercial alliances and operate "free zones" across Africa like the ones Dubai Ports World is building. Add in sovereign wealth funds and private military contractors, and you have the agile geopolitical units of a neomedieval world. Even during this global financial crisis, multinational corporations heavily populate the list of the world's largest economic entities; the commercial diplomacy of emerging-market firms such as China's Haier and Mexico's Cemex has already turned North-South relations inside out faster than the nonaligned movement ever did. There are positive sides to a world where every man can be a nation unto himself. Postmodern Medicis such as Bill Gates, Anil Ambani, George Soros, and Richard Branson take it upon themselves to cure pandemics, run corporate cities, undermine authoritarian regimes, and sponsor climate-saving research. But the Middle Ages were fundamentally a time of fear, uncertainty, plagues, and violence.

So, too, their successor. AIDS and SARS, terrorism and piracy, cyclones and rising sea levels—it is no longer clear how to invest in the future, or what future to invest in. Figuring out how to respond to this new world will take decades at least. The next Renaissance is still a long way off.[17]

As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, the current situation naturally leads to further discussions of a contemporary world order in the imagery of globalisation by the various aspects of ethnicity, identity, peacekeeping, humanitarian intervention, regionalism, democratisation, the environment, financial instability, social movements and terrorism among others that are now interdependent and integrated, emphasising international and trans-national connections i.e. globalised international typology of order. Certainly, the world order continues to be state-centred with the mainstream approaches to IR still being dominant i.e. balance of power, polarity, and collective security but as the various aspects above indicate, opens up to a wider agenda to the political economy, the environment and sustainability, and also to different values and norms. As the political is primarily a social activity, the efficacy of the world order is not simply confined to international order in the form of security or regimes and institutions pertaining to relations among states, especially dominant ones in the context of global governance. It also extends to the emphasis on the individual as the main stakeholder of world order.

As such, globalised states based on the globalised international typology of order assimilate the characteristics of the global system, states, and humanity. It includes the elements of (1) the social-state system in promoting development; (2) identity and the nation-state especially the contract between

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17. Parag Khanna, "The Next Big Thing: Neo-Medievalism," *Foreign Policy*, May–June, at http://www.paragkhanna.com (accessed 19 July 2009).

citizen and state; (3) polarity and collectivisation of security especially multilateralism political economy of the triads i.e. North America, Europe and East Asia and the governance of the IMF (International Monetary Fund), World Bank and WTO (World Trade Organisation); (4) the complex network of multilateral management and international governance of regimes, international organisations and INGOs (International non-governmental organisations); (5) regionalism; (6) liberal rights order i.e. human rights and democracy; and (7) North-South relations i.e. economic and equity issues. Pertinent to these elements is the broader issue of legitimacy—representation and accountability involving the state, sub-state and trans-national authorities and actors.[18] Globalised states as an understanding of changes and redesigning of the international order correspond to the neo-medieval approach of the transformation of the political community. It was no surprise that the NAM (Non-Aligned Movement) summit consisting of 118 countries of the developing world, addressed issues ranging from a new international order not based on size, military or economic capabilities but on a USA administration, that at the time in 2009 had seemingly shifted from its policy of unilateral diplomacy; to industrialised countries to not be given a free reign to manage the economic crisis that they started which greatly impacted on developing economies; and resuming peace talks between nuclear India and Pakistan.[19]

How do Muslim countries and communities figure in this transformative age? The features of global Muslim politics are a result of translocality.[20] As such, Islam in Muslim countries and

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18. Clark, "Globalisation," 728–740.
19. "Developing States Seek New World Order at NAM," *AFP,* at http://www.afp.com (accessed 15 July 2009).
20. As mentioned earlier, apart from multiculturalism and migration as modes of translocality, another of its modes is as an abstract notion of how ideas and theories move or indeed, travel and change through space which is accelerated by the information and communication technology revolution.

communities is acculturated as an authoritative and authentic identity and practice in different times and places yet possess an almost immediate otherness in globalisation. On one level, the *ummah* is brought together, providing communication and the imagination of a singular political space and utopian identity but on another level, emphasises its own internal plurality and produces the contemporary features of global Muslim politics. While the caveat of a neo-medieval order may generate domination and exclusion of certain segments of society sometimes in the form of identity and normative politics e.g. Islam and the other, because of the critical public space globalisation provides, it also alludes to a new wave of reform and revival of the Muslim political community in the context of Muslim countries as globalised states in a neo-medieval order. While politics will continue to be mainly conceived in local and national settings, global Muslim politics is certainly not limited or even accurately depicted as so-called "radical jihad" and "illiberal Islam," especially when it comes to anti-neo-liberal globalisation. This is on top of existing issues about U.S. policy in West Asia and its relationship with the Muslim world, Turkey's membership in the (EU) European Union, Pakistan and India's relationship, U.S. "War on Terror" and continued presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Muslim minorities in the West. It is possible to envisage discussions for the study of IR in Islam that synthesises its classical framework with both mainstream and alternative approaches to world politics.

Negating Islamism

As mentioned earlier, Muslim politics in an age of nation-states refers to a history of compromise and conflict of Muslim political communities that gave birth to problematic Western terms such as "Islamism," which today is seen by a number

of their scholars as a waning ideology due to plural identity politics, diffusion of religious knowledge and authority, and the political compromise of the "Islamists" themselves. This era of "post-Islamism," in accepting nation-states as the world system based on an already skewed concept, is supposedly manifested by their nationalist orientation, that pan-Islamic ideal lacks geo-strategic value as compared to the norms of the free-market and democracy, by Muslims voting for interests rather than religious values, by participating in the political process of democracy and civil society that actually contribute to the secularisation of societies, and with current Islamisation being about individualised piety rather than socially-mobilised projects.[21] This misconception of Islamic activism is due to the limiting of the scope of the political imbued with neo-realism and excessive institutional and material concerns, and dismissal of normative-based activism which supposedly disqualifies it from describing Islam that transcends the social, political and intellectual spheres.

It does not imply an absence of the political but a situation of comparative hegemony, with the state's hegemony of the political space, and Islam dominant in the societal realm. This is not the abandonment of Muslim politics, but a reconstitution in forms more suited to a globalised world where the state is just one among many sites of the political.[22]

As such, in the social scientific analysis of Islam, there is Islamic politics and there is the politics of Islam based on normativism and realism, respectively. There is no separation of religion and politics—from the AKP in Turkey and the *Ḥizb al-Wasaṭ al-Jadīd* in Egypt steering away from the Refah (Virtue) party and the MB to promote a more progressive discourse of social justice and development at the expense of the

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21. O. Roy, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
22. Mandaville, *Global*, 346 and 348.

"traditional Islamism" of the Islamic state, implementation of the *shariʿah* that may be identified with Saudi Arabia, Iran or even the Taliban in Afghanistan, to PAS (Islamic Party) in Malaysia, which dropped its Islamic state manifesto for a welfare state as it went to the general elections in 2008 and gained in a coalition comprising of secular based parties and later looked into power-sharing with the lead ruling party i.e. UMNO (United Malays National Organisation). There is also the matter of identity and the issue of who speaks for Islam and who listens?—between the problematic classification of traditional, reformist, modernist, liberal, moderate, and progressive advocates and their constituencies ranging from different lines of social affiliation, class, interpretive values and education, that within this pluralising discourse is the reality and relevance of Islamic activism as a human agency for modernisation and development which is contextualised by their political situation and identity e.g. as Muslim majority countries, as minorities, as Muslim majority in secular states, as Muslim majority in Islamic state, or the trans-national idealism of the *ummah*. All of this occurs in the wider context of globalisation, with the state as the vanguard of the neo-liberal order and the social sphere becoming increasingly political due to religion, social identity and consumption occupying the same space, which is distinct from secularisation or individualisation of religious practice associated with "post-Islamism."[23]

There is simply no denying the necessity of both normative and realist lens when it comes to the behaviour of Muslim countries. Just prior to globalisation via the information communication technology revolution in the 1980s, the siege of Makkah in 1979 (20th November to 4th December) that corresponded to the Islamic calendar of

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23. Ibid., 333–342.

the year 1400 (1st *Muḥarram*) depicts the already confusing mix of Muslim politics in general around this time—the "millenarianism" of Juhayman al-Otaibi, a movement that was inspired by the monarchy's senior *'ulamā'*, and Juhayman's proclamation of the Mahdi's arrival; Saudi Arabia's earlier influx of non-Muslims into the country via ARAMCO (Arab American Oil Company); pan-Arabism's threat to the monarchy and King Faisal's articulation of pan-Islamism and his invitation of anti-Arab nationalists in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood and even the black activists of the Nation of Islam into the kingdom; King Faisal's own liberalisation of the monarchy with the abolition of slavery, education for women and the creation of Saudi television in the 1960s; the 1973 Arab-Israeli War and the oil embargo against the U.S and its pro-Israeli European allies and wealth it created for the kingdom; the influx of labourers from developing Muslim and non-Muslim countries; slow equitable distribution of wealth to the isolated Bedouin settlements in the kingdom and the Saudi National Guard of which Juhayman was a part of; and Juhayman's sedition in proclaiming the illegitimacy of the House of Saud's leadership stating that they were not of the Prophet's or of *Quraysh* descent. There was also the Iranian Islamic revolution and the U.S non-interference and its threat to the Saudis in the context of the Cold War—the Saudis' close relationship with President Carter— supply of military hardware and training for the Saudi National Guard, CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) assistance in exchange for oil and the use of the airfield of Dhahran for its military missions; Soviet support for Khomeini and Marxist elements from Ethiopia to Afghanistan; the siege of the U.S. embassies in Iran and Pakistan during the hajj season of 1979—the latter which was fuelled by the misperception that the Makkah siege was orchestrated by the CIA and Israel, a misperception that was also held in India and Turkey and American misperception

that the siege was orchestrated by Shi'ites; the involvement of France's intelligence, SDECE (*Service de Documentation Exterieure et de Contre-Espionage*) and commando unit, GIGN (*Group d'Intervention de la Gandermerie Nationale*) in neutralising the siege in Makkah, the Shi'ites community uprising in Saudi Arabia's eastern province inspired by the siege in Makkah and the Iranian revolution. Then, there was the fallout of the Makkah siege and the international politics surrounding it— local insurgency against Soviet backed Kabul and the invasion of Afghanistan; Pakistan seeking security guarantees from the U.S. against the Soviet Union; condemnation of the invasion of Afghanistan and the *fatwā* proclaiming *jihād* against the Soviets in Saudi Arabia, and recruitment of volunteers bound by Wahhabism and supervised by the CIA to the front-lines, which included one particular Bin Laden and as we know it, the rest is present history.[24]

> It was a stroke of luck, Abu Sultan reminisced, that Juhayman seized the Grand Mosque just before the advent of mobile phones, the internet, live satellite TV news extended the reach of extremists. Back in 1979, the Saudi government managed to muffle Juhayman's message, containing the rebellion through an information blockade that would be unthinkable now.[25]

The state's monopoly over information and censorship is certainly a thing of the past. This is exemplified by the recent fall-out of the Iranian presidential elections where, despite a blanket censorship of mainstream international news organisations from coverage of the demonstrations, clips and live-feeds of state crackdown on the protestors kept appearing on the internet, including the infamous shooting of Neda Agha-Soltan, presumably by Basij militia

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24. Y. Trofimov, *The Siege of Mecca* (London: Penguin Books, 2007).
25. Ibid., 254–255.

for public consumption. This was followed by a BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) interview of one of the witnesses of the shooting, Dr. Arash Hejazi who returned to the United Kingdom a few days later to give his account and pronounce the right to assembly as being enshrined in the constitution of the Islamic republic.[26] From the deeply personal account of the trauma of death in the new media later projected onto TV screens, scenes of civil unrest and political dissent, and the state's response to the issue of legitimacy of the presidential elections for the world to observe, cracks begin to appear in the solidarity of the guardian council (*wilāyat al-faqīh*) with the vocal support for pro-opposition candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi by former president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Head of the Assembly of Experts, the council responsible for appointing and removing the supreme leader, the drama of identity politics and ethical claims in the Islamic republic takes an ever-present global centre stage beyond the control of the state and its institutions.[27]

As mentioned before, what is happening is not the abandonment of Muslim politics, but a reconstitution in forms more suited to a globalised world where the state is just one among many sites of the political. This misperception may be attributed to the way social scientists and those in the humanities are trained in their various disciplines on the exploration and explanation of a phenomenon. The real cohesion of religion, politics and society is at times negligently dismissed for the narrow explanatory context of a field of the social sciences.[28] Some three decades ago, Ernest Gellner

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26. "Iran Doctor Tells of Neda's Death," *BBC*, at http://www.bbc.co.uk (accessed 25 June 2009).
27. "Rafsanjani Calls for Release of Those Held After June 12 Vote" *CNN*, at http://www.cnn.com (accessed 18 July 2009).
28. For example, Ernest Gellner is famous for quoting Max Weber on his disdain for the constraints of academic discipline, i.e., "I am not a donkey and I don't have a field."

synthesised the ideas of David Hume and Ibn Khaldūn and applied them in the explanation of Muslim society. Gellner explains Hume's view that:

> It is remarkable that the principles of religion have a kind of flux and reflux in the human mind, and that men have a natural tendency to rise from idolatry to theism, and to sink again from theism to idolatry.[29]

According to Gellner, Hume's oscillating theory of religion was at once sociological, psychological and political in terms of hierarchy, fear and uncertainty, and deference. He completed his theoretical framework with Ibn Khaldūn's political sociology. Perhaps this is a framework that deserves revisiting today.

> . . . it does capture the way in which ecology, social organization, and ideology interlock in one highly distinctive civilization; that it explains how their distinctive fusions produced its stabilities and tensions; and continues to influence the various paths along which it is finally entering the modern world.[30]

A neo-classical Islamic paradigm of nations

As mentioned earlier, it is easy to envisage discussions of the study of IR in Islam that synthesises its classical framework with both mainstream and alternative approaches to world politics in corresponding with the social scientific analysis of Islam, where there is Islamic politics and the politics of Islam based on normativism and realism, respectively. Concerns for the need of an adequate framework of analysis for the study of IR in Islam has led to an emphasis on the division of *dār*

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29. David Hume in Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 9.
30. Ibid., 85.

al-ṣulḥ (territory of peaceful arrangement/tension) or *dār al-ʿahd* (territory of covenant/peace) as a permanent state or the organising principle of IR. But there is also the view that a neo-classical Islamic framework is required to account for the relationship between norms and values in relation to interests and interaction that ultimately maintains the traditional division of the world into domains of peace and war and also accounts for the expansion of the political in the context of the modern *ummah* through civil society and trans-national activism.[31] In this view, state and society constitute the *ʿaṣabiyyah* or solidarity of Islam.[32]

> The state is invisible; it must be personified before it can be seen, symbolised before it can be loved, imagined before it can be conceived[33]

It is argued that the nation-state system is a system of durable inequality, a neo-colonial view that domination occurs via the structural-global, ideological-neo-liberal, and power-imperial combinations that may be further explained through dependency theory in political development. The international-global order does not represent but rather dilutes the Islamic worldview through the power-politics of Muslim countries.

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31. Walzer in Sabet, *Islam*, 101–105. As mentioned before, the typology of trans-nationalism refers to inter-governmental organisations, state-sponsored initiatives, *ṣūfī* and pietistic networks, broad-based Islamic activism ideologies, the *hajj*, NGOs, and migrant Muslim communities, and also the virtual *ummah* of the new media.
32 Ibn Khaldūn identified three forms of leadership in relation to solidarity: (1) governance/leadership based on natural social solidarity (*ʿaṣabiyyah* as unmitigated power); (2) governance/leadership based on reason and natural law in conjunction with *ʿaṣabiyyah*; (3) governance/leadership based on *Sharīʿah*.
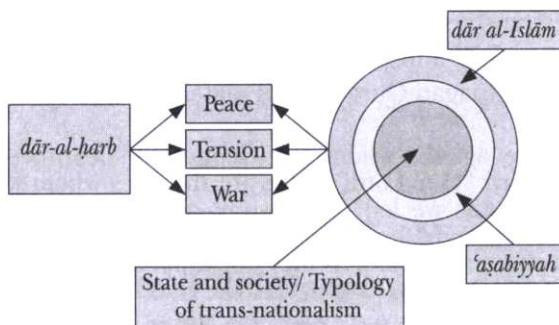33. Walzer in Sabet, *Islam*, 136.

Figure 1: A neo-classical model that uses the inhibitive normative categories of Islam and war as inherent and constructed identity rather than a permanent state of conflict and hostility that perpetuates realist/liberal approaches of international relations while preserving the *dār al-Islām's* ethical claims. It also takes into account sub-state and transnational politics as inner spheres of the political contributing to socio-political ascendency or decline, and Islamic activism in general.[34]

A neo-classical Islamic approach to IR restores a realist-normative synthesis to contemporary Muslim countries as globalised states and Islam as constitutive to the political. It may also be worth pointing out that Gellner's theoretical synthesis of Hume's oscillation of polytheism and monism where the swing of the former to the apotheosis of the latter and vice versa is facilitated by what Gellner describes as "competitive sycophancy" embedded in religion, psychology, society, hierarchy and authority where polytheism is as much a socio-political fact as it is religious; and Ibn Khaldūn's political sociology where "crucial virtues and traits are forged, in his view, not in the psyche of individuals, but in communities and their social environment"[35] are informed by the Qur'ānic narrative. We need only to refer to the entirety of *Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ*

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34. The figure above is modified from Sabet, who is keen to amplify the *wilāyat al-faqīh* as the repositories of *ʿaṣabiyyah*.
35. Gellner, *Muslim Society*, 16–17.

to understand its cohesive and realist-normative narrative of monism, society and politics on the idolatrous nation of the Pharoah, the pagan Quraysh and materialism of Qarūn.

> Those against whom the charge will be proved will say: "Our Lord! These are the ones whom we led astray: we led them astray, as we were astray ourselves: we free ourselves (from them) in Thy presence: it was not us they worshipped."[36]

'Aṣabiyyah may be operationalised as a regime and pattern of authority in the Islamic state that goes beyond ideology or socialisation—it is in fact a reflection of a religio-political mandate in producing strategic leadership and reformulating the scenario of Islamic transformation via a ruling elite's moral and intellectual ability to rule, even before having access to power, and when it does, operates a network of guiding relationships pertaining to Islamic activism that has a collective perspective to society as a whole. This will help generate a critical Islam that confirms the relevance and normative reliability of the government and disseminate consultative religious debate and reconciliation in Muslim relations concerning political, economic and social issues. It requires a pan-Islamic type institution and bloc mentality, and a reconstitution of the state for that matter, perhaps along the lines of an EU (European Union) or US federative experiences, that is able to galvanise the typology of Muslim trans-nationalism as a global or ummatic cultural experience as a new politics of identity, quite unlike how organisations such as the OIC is functionally embedded in the community of nations and facilitate state interests first.[37] Ideally, it calls for a modified restoration of a Caliphate/Imamate system to reinvigorate ethical claims of the neo-classical approach.

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36. *Al-Qaṣaṣ* (28): 63.
37. Sabet, *Islam*, 146.