
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY AND ITS ISLAMIC MALCONTENTS

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The power of religion has always been evident in international affairs, but certainly not in the study of international relations. In the literature on international society in particular, a subject in which one might expect discussion of religion to occupy an important place, religion has generally been treated as a premodern, historical force largely irrelevant in contemporary international relations.¹ Instead, theorists of international society such as Martin Wight, Hedley Bull, Adam Watson, and Evan Luard have focused almost entirely on states as the relevant units and elite culture as the determining ideology in international society.² One important recent contribution to this literature is the work of Dorothy Jones, who suggests that through the “declaratory tradition” of international law, states have already agreed upon a universal “code of peace” to form the core values of international society.³

Since the mid-1960s, formulation of the tradition has resulted from the efforts and interaction of states of different political systems, ideological commitments, cultural heritages, and levels of economic development. If ever an ethical tradition could be called universal in the sense of encompassing the many varieties of states and people on the globe today, this one can.⁴

When religion does emerge in the international relations literature, it is invariably in the works of skeptics of international society. Religion, in their view, is often an atavistic force militating against the possibility of a meaningful international society. Instead, as in the writings of Bernard Lewis, Robert Kaplan, and Samuel Huntington, religion promotes a “clash of civilizations.”⁵

The logic of both sets of views is easily understandable, for the idea of international society is one important component of the “package” of European Enlightenment ideals, which includes rationalism, secularism, and humanism. International society is possible and meaningful only when states and peoples agree upon a set of commonly shared norms, values, or principles

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that make international relations more than the mere struggle for power among rival states in an anarchical milieu. International society arose first in Europe and later spread throughout the world, according to this view, only by transcending the moral diversity and cultural pluralism promoted in large part by religion.

At first glance, the prominent role of religion in fueling conflicts on every continent today appears to confirm the skeptics' view. Within the Muslim world in particular, there is certainly no shortage of men and women who interpret and use Islam in ways that make the idea of international society problematic. For these Islamic malcontents, the notion of a universal code of peace is problematic on two levels: first, the means by which this international society expanded, and second, the way it is structured today. This essay focuses on both objections in order to evaluate the idea of international society—its bases, characteristics, and viability—from the perspectives of its Islamic challengers.

This review should not be seen as presenting "the Islamic view" on international society. Nor should it be viewed as a critique of the existence of core legal/moral principles in international relations that make possible an international society. Indeed, I believe that a properly nuanced analysis reveals no such thing as an Islamic "civilizational" approach, let alone challenge, to international society. Rather, my goal is to present alternative perspectives on how international society has evolved and how its future development may be shaped by its current critics. The views presented here are *not* shared by all Muslims. But they are views that characterize a large number of Muslim intellectuals and political activists, and certainly resonate among many ordinary Muslims. Thus, they are worthy of note, study, and understanding if international society is to expand and become truly universal.

The Expansion of International Society

International society may be understood according to a variety of philosophical and ethical approaches, ranging from realism, which gives it little if any scope, to cosmopolitanism, which asserts the universal community of human beings. From the historical and political perspectives, however, international society as it exists today can be understood in only one way: the international order created and dominated by Western states. No theorist of international society has denied or can deny its Western origins and biases. Hedley Bull and Adam Watson have traced the evolution of internationalist ideals to European mercantile and later imperial expansion in the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries.⁶ The result, as Bull observes in *The Anarchical Society*, is that "the nascent cosmopolitan culture of today, like the international society which it helps to sustain, is weighted in favour of the dominant cultures of the West."⁷ Similarly, Samuel Huntington recently characterized the term "world community," which has become so fashionable in the wake of the Cold War, as being nothing more than a euphemism for the West.⁸

The expansion of this international society often came at the expense of Muslim powers and peoples. When Europeans first ventured abroad in pursuit of profits, their main competitors on the sea routes as well as in the seaports of the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean were inevitably Muslim merchants. When European states first established colonies in Africa and Asia, their main rivals were frequently Muslim rulers. Thus, beginning with the Crusades and continuing with European commercial and imperial expansion, Islamic civilization has been the subject of intense European concern. When international society was discussed, it was frequently in the context of whether or not Muslim peoples fell within its pale. As late as 1897, William Muir, the founder of the chair of Islamic studies at the University of Edinburgh, answered the question in the negative: Islam, he wrote, was "the only undisguised and formidable antagonist of Christianity."⁹

In contrast, Islamic interest in medieval Europe was sparse. On the theological level, this disinterest may have resulted from the belief that Christianity represented an obsolescent faith, one that had been absorbed into and superseded by Islam. On the more mundane level, it is clear that Muslim scholars considered medieval European civilization as culturally inferior to Islam. Therefore, it merited little intellectual attention. The most important medieval Muslim geographer, Mas'udi (d. 956), offers this assessment of the North Europeans:

As regards the people of the northern quadrant, they are the ones for whom the sun is distant from the zenith, as they penetrate to the north, such as the Slavs, the Franks, and those nations that are their neighbors. . . . The warm humor is lacking among them; their bodies are large, their natures gross, their manners harsh, their understanding dull, and their tongues heavy. . . . Their religious beliefs lack solidity, and this is because of the nature of cold and the lack of warmth. The farther they are to the north the more stupid, gross, and brutish they are. These qualities increase in them as they go further northward.¹⁰

Islam's contacts with the Crusaders did nothing to alter such views.

Instead, what Muslim scholarship imbibed throughout the medieval period was the philosophical and scientific heritage of ancient Greece, Persia, India, and China. Greek historical and philosophical texts were avidly translated into Arabic and spawned a rationalist school of Islamic philosophy; Persian administrative and aesthetic ideals underlay Abbasid culture; Indian mathematics and Chinese paper, silk, and porcelain were quickly assimilated by Muslim peoples as far west as Spain. Thus, Islamic civilization served as a conduit for the transmission of each of these philosophical, scientific, and cultural artifacts to the Western world.

Even when Europe exploded with creative energy during the Renaissance, followed by the rapid growth in maritime exploration in the fifteenth century,

the Muslim world remained relatively unaware and unconcerned. There are very few records of Muslims visiting—or expressing any desire to visit—European countries well into the eighteenth century.¹¹

Interest in Europe, and more specifically in European scientific and technological advances, came only with the intrusion of European powers into the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal domains beginning in the eighteenth century. As European imperialism began to advance in the territories formerly ruled by these decaying empires, Muslim attempts to avoid absorption into the expanding European order came in two forms. On the one hand, there were violent, sporadic, and disorganized paroxysms of discontent, such as the 1857 Sepoy mutiny in India and the 1881 'Urabi revolt in Egypt. These were quickly suppressed by the vastly superior military technology of the West.

The Islamic challenge is trivialized if explained as merely resentment of the power and wealth of the West.

On the other hand, reflection upon the Muslim powers' repeated military failures led state elites toward quieter and more sustained imitation of Western development. Thus, the Tanzimat (1839-1876) was launched by the Ottomans to bolster the weakening empire through administrative and legal reform. It became the model for similar "modernizing" schemes in Qajar Iran and what remained of Muslim power in India. The earliest reform movements meant imitation of Western science and education, while attempting to prevent the incursion of Western political and social values. Instead of undergoing an evolutionary process of internal reform, Muslim societies experienced reform through state imposition. As a result, a bifurcation of cultures soon developed, with a very thin layer of Western-educated, secularized, "modern" elites, and the remainder of the population consisting of the Islamically educated, religious, "traditional" masses. The anti-colonial movements that gained momentum with World War I and climaxed in the aftermath of World War II were led by nationalists drawn largely from these Westernized elites. These men wanted not an overthrow of the international order, but admission as full members. For them, Islamic ideology—when they did resort to it—was merely one instrument among others for the implementation of their nationalist agendas.

Yet the secular-nationalist vision was never entirely successful in dominating or eliminating competing visions of Islam in modern politics. Challenges to the nationalists' agenda began to appear almost as soon as that agenda seemed to have triumphed with the retreat of European colonialism and the emergence of independent Muslim nation-states. The fact that these challenges

continue to this day is graphically evinced in the tumultuous politics of virtually every Muslim country.

The turbulence of the Islamic "revival" has once more made Islam the source of much Western anxiety. For many disenfranchised Cold War warriors, Islam remains the one last great ideological force to be vanquished before the triumph of Western liberal, secular, capitalist democracy. For many Western liberals, the current unrest in much of the Muslim world is analogous to the stormy Christian Reformation, a necessary period of violent change before the ultimate triumph of secular over sacred.

Of course, neither view is entirely correct. Islamic civilization by no means represents a monolithic cultural force fundamentally at odds with the West; nor is it engaged in a belated version of the Reformation. The Islamic revival is a complex mix of elements both unique to the Muslim world and shared with other post-colonial societies. The Islamic challenge is trivialized if explained as merely resentment of the power and wealth of the West. It derives its vitality and its appeal from a much more elemental factor: the widespread conviction that Islamic history has gone horribly astray, and that Muslim realities for centuries have been widely divergent from Islamic ethics. The fact that Muslim countries are characterized today by some of the most notoriously authoritarian regimes provides a powerful internal dynamic to the use of Islam as a revolutionary force. The fact that the Muslim countries range in economic prosperity from the fabulously wealthy to the hopelessly impoverished provides a second powerful internal dynamic to the upsurge of religiously based calls for social justice. Apart from any rejection of Western versions of modernity, and apart from any professed antipathy for Western culture or policies, the Muslim countries themselves contain ample domestic sources for the infusion of Islamic ideologies into the political arena. "The Islamic revival," as described by the Pakistani Islamic leader Khurshid Ahmad, "is represented by the Muslims' urge to set their own house in order and to build their own societies and states."¹²

The Muslim peoples today are engaged individually and collectively in an effort to define their place, and hence the place of Islam, in contemporary international life. But the challenge of shaping a "culturally authentic" response to a world order shaped and dominated by the West is not unique to Muslims; it is indeed the challenge facing all of the formerly colonized peoples who comprise the Third World. The Islamic revival is in fact incomprehensible if divorced from the broader phenomenon of "Third Worldism."¹³ Given the vitality of Islam as an assertive political force in the world and the large percentage of the Third World that considers itself Muslim, Ali Mazrui's declaration that "at present, Islam is the only major culture to rebel against the West" rings with the force of logical inevitability.¹⁴

Yet how has this "Islamic revolt" been manifest in concrete terms? A revolt against the West would hardly be perceptible if accession to the prevailing international legal regime were to be the measure. To the contrary, the Muslim states would strongly support Dorothy Jones's contention that the code of

peace enjoys universal support as a normative framework for the conduct of interstate relations. For example, all of the approximately 50 Muslim-majority states are members of the United Nations. Indeed, like other Third World states, they rushed to join the organization, petitioning for membership within the first two years of independence. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of these states are signatories to all the leading international instruments enumerating the principles of international law, economic relations, environmental policy, and human rights.

The evidence for assimilation and against revolt does not end here. In 1969, 24 Muslim states voted to establish an international organization to further mutual cooperation on the basis of the "immortal teachings of Islam."¹⁵ The charter of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), adopted three years later, includes a list of principles taken directly from the U.N. Charter. Among these are the principles of sovereignty and equality of states, noninterference in domestic affairs, and prohibition of the use or the threat of force. Where then is the "Islamic revolt"?

***Jihad* in the contemporary fundamentalist discourse has emerged as an instrument not for the diffusion of the faith, but for its defense against a host of home-grown enemies who are blamed for Muslim weakness in the international arena.**

Much of the answer lies in the next section's discussion of the structure of the international system. However, with regard to the way international society expanded into the Muslim world, I would suggest that Muslim states have accommodated themselves to the prevailing international norms while stopping short of assimilating them into Islamic political or legal theory. In other words, although they have committed themselves to the principles of international law, there has yet to occur a theoretical incorporation of these principles into a coherent and modern elaboration of Islamic international law. One tentative step toward such a reformulation was taken in 1980 when the OIC voted to establish an International Islamic Law Commission "to devise ways and means to secure representation in order to put forward the Islamic point of view before the International Court of Justice and such other institutions of the United Nations when a question requiring the projection of Islamic views arises therein."¹⁶ This body has yet to meet, mainly because the state elites who voted to create it realize that in practice the commission's findings may constitute a revolt not only against the Western-originated international system to which they have given their assent, but also against themselves.

Without a comprehensive or authoritative elaboration of the principles of

Islamic international law in the modern age, most Muslim and non-Muslim writers base their discussion of Islam in international politics on the medieval theory developed a millennium ago. According to this legal theory, the world was divided into two opposing poles, *dar al-Islam* (the realm of Islam) and *dar al-harb* (the realm of war). Some jurists added a third category, *dar al-sulh* (the realm of truce), in which the Islamic state had treaty relations with a non-Muslim power. Where Muslims did not have treaty obligations with non-Muslims, the Islamic state was obliged, according to many medieval jurists, to undertake *jihad*—to exert constant pressure, by non-military as well as military means—in order to incorporate *dar al-harb* into *dar al-Islam*.

Much of the Western literature on Islam in contemporary international politics begins with the assumption that the Muslim worldview is still shaped by the *dar al-harb/dar al-Islam* dichotomy. Such arguments overlook the centuries-long experience of Muslim states; Islamic “customary law” provides numerous examples that Muslim state practice never quite conformed to the legal theory. By the mid-eighth century, *dar al-Islam* was fragmented into a number of independent, frequently hostile principalities that did not hesitate to find allies in *dar al-harb* for their wars with each other. Moreover, such arguments neglect contemporary Muslim writings that challenge the applicability of such a worldview given modern realities. Even the so-called “fundamentalist” rejection of Western culture and its manifestations in the Muslim world is more an anti-imperialist ideology than a medieval Islamic perspective. The *dar al-Islam/dar al-harb* conception was predicated on both the moral and material superiority of Islamic civilization. However, the contemporary fundamentalist rejection of Western civilization is based on faith in the moral superiority of Islam, coupled with a painful awareness of the material superiority of the West. It is, therefore, a reaction to historical forces perceived to be beyond the control of Muslim peoples. In stark contrast with the medieval attitude, it is more of a *defensive* rather than an offensive view of Islam’s role in the world today. Whereas many non-Muslims (both in the West and in other parts of the world) tend to view and depict Islam as an aggressive force hostile to competing ideologies, the contemporary Muslim view is profoundly insecure, almost paranoid, regarding the aggressive intentions of non-Muslims. This view has been bolstered by a series of highly destructive international conflicts, ranging from the Middle East to the Caucasus to Central Asia, in which Muslims have suffered incalculable human and material losses. The outright eradication of Muslim communities and Islamic culture is seen as the goal underlying a number of “domestic” conflicts in countries such as Bosnia, Chechnya, and India.

This defensive attitude often manifests itself in vigorous, sometimes violent action, generally aimed *not* at non-Muslim states or peoples, but rather toward the nationalist-secularist regimes ruling most Muslim countries. *Jihad* in the contemporary fundamentalist discourse has emerged as an instrument not for the diffusion of the faith, but for its defense against a host of home-grown enemies who are blamed for Muslim weakness in the international arena. The

modern *jihad* is aimed, more than anything else, at internal Muslim reform, at combating the *jahiliyya* that has been diffused into Muslim countries by the West and is propagated by the West's local agents.

Jahiliyya, like *jihad*, is a term defying precise translation. Literally it means "ignorance" and is applied historically to Arab society before the advent of Islam. The term is laden with moral and emotional overtones. The *jahiliyya* signifies moral corruption through the absence of self-restraint, oppression and tyranny as a result of the substitution of human will for divine commandments, and the persecution and martyrdom of the virtuous few by the evil many.

The principal exponent and critic of the neo-*jahiliyya* was the Egyptian leader and ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb. He was hanged in 1966 for plotting to overthrow the government of Gamal Abdel Nasser. In the period since his death, his "martyrdom" has only increased the influence of his works, which have been translated into several languages and are widely available in virtually every Muslim country. Sayyid Qutb and all fundamentalist writers are united in their belief that Western civilization represents the modern *jahiliyya par excellence*. This civilization spreads its corruption through indecent literature and television programs broadcast by Western lackeys in Muslim governments. It vitiates the moral basis of Islamic culture by building gambling casinos and nightclubs in Muslim cities. It attacks Muslims militarily through the state of Israel, considered the puppet of American interests, and through arms provided to Muslim stooges in order to suppress their own people. But the most insidious attack by the *jahiliyya* is the Muslim modernists' attempt to reconcile Islam with Western principles. One passage from *Ma'alim fi al-tariq (Signposts along the path)* is particularly revealing of Sayyid Qutb's argument:

We are also surrounded by *jahiliyya* today, which is of the same nature as it was during the first period of Islam, perhaps a little deeper. Our whole environment, people's beliefs and ideas, habits and art, rules and laws, is *jahiliyya*, even to the extent that what we consider to be Islamic culture, Islamic sources, Islamic philosophy and Islamic thought are also constructs of *jahiliyya*!¹⁷

Islamic fundamentalism, particularly the most militant manifestations of it, represents a small minority of the total Muslim population. It does represent, however, a significant portion of Islamic activists, that is, those who are currently politically organized and religiously assertive. Fundamentalist parties, ranging from the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria to Hamas in Palestine to the Jama'at-i Islami in Pakistan, have emerged in the authoritarian environments of these and other states as the rallying point for all opposition. Their support comes less from ideological commitment than from frustration at the lack of political alternatives. As long as the Muslim world's politics continue to be characterized by the absence of representative government,

fundamentalist ideology, grounded as it is upon a rejection of Western values, will pose a challenge to the Muslim secular-nationalist elites and the Western-originated international society to which they have given assent.

The Structure of International Society

The idea of international society presupposes the existence of an international system. Most Western theorists approach international society as an interstate society, created and maintained by state actions and consent, aimed at preserving the state system. Dorothy Jones, for example, argues that the declaratory tradition of international law "is and can be universal because the conditions that formed and shaped it have become or are becoming universal. The conditions are those of an international system created by institutions and interactions of sovereign states."¹⁸

Thus, acceptance of the sovereign state as the principal actor in international relations lies at the heart of most Western international society arguments. This is often a descriptive as well as normative position, with most theorists arguing that the nation-state not only is, but ought to be, the legitimate international actor, because it is most conducive to international order.¹⁹ Rejection or modification of the sovereign state system may not negate all other principles of international society, but it would surely reprioritize them and alter their meaning. "Change the nature of states," Stephen Krasner writes, "and virtually everything else in human society would also have to be changed."²⁰

The legitimacy of the sovereign state system within the Muslim world has been the focus of much Islamic debate and the target of much Islamic opposition. The reason is that state sovereignty, simply put, is perceived as representing a fundamental challenge to certain core ethical values, one of these being the idea that Muslims belong to the *umma*, a single universal Muslim community endowed with moral purpose, referred to by the Qur'an. The fact that the sovereign state would be challenged on ethical grounds is inevitable given the explicit moral value which the Qur'an invests in the unified Muslim community and the condemnation it reserves for those who confer any moral worth on linguistic, tribal, or ethnic ascriptions.

Historically, of course, the *umma* fragmented almost immediately after the founding of the Islamic state with the Sunni-Shi'a controversy over legitimate leadership of the community. Subsequently, the *dar al-Islam* was divided into a number of independent, rival states. Yet remarkably, the political theory did not accommodate prevailing political realities until well into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Even the most "modern" of classical Islamic thinkers, Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406), accepts the *de facto* political divisions of the Muslim world while acknowledging that Islamic thought remains resistant to the *de jure* legitimation of a politically divided *umma*.²¹ Only in the sixteenth century, with the simultaneous rise and consolidation of the three great modern Muslim empires (Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal), does the idea of independent

and legitimate Muslim states become widely accepted among religious scholars.

Europeans must receive much of the credit for reviving the belief that the Muslim *umma* is or ought to be a single community. First, European imperialism engendered a strong sense of shared historical experience and destiny. The most ardent pan-Islamists of the past century have been fundamentally anti-imperialists, led by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (d. 1897).²² Second, European Orientalism provided intellectual and psychological support for the idea of a distinct and monolithic "Islam." Orientalism's most profound impact, as Edward Said describes it, is to fashion the ways in which people view their own culture.²³ The writings of many pan-Islamists certainly reflect the impact of Orientalist thought. Third, Europeans did much to validate the Ottoman sultan's claim of being caliph of the Muslim *umma*. They did so formally, as in the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, concluded between Russia and the Sublime Porte in 1774. They also did so inadvertently, as when the British went to exorbitant lengths in India to undermine Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II's claims after 1880.²⁴ Despite British attempts to neutralize Indian Muslim support for Turkey during World War I, public opinion remained strongly in favor of the Ottoman caliph. Indian Muslim agitation regarding the integrity of the caliphate figured decisively in Atatürk's decision in 1924 to abolish the Ottoman caliphate altogether.²⁵ Several conferences were convened over the next 15 years to select a new caliph, each ending in acrimony over rival candidates representing the ambitions of rival states.²⁶ The idea of the caliphate as a symbol of Muslim unity was not enough to surmount the reality of squabbling states.

The Islamic challenge, so often depicted in the West as aggressive or militant, emerges consistently in Islamic literature as a defensive reaction to the violence of the state.

The reality of twentieth-century Muslim politics is indeed one shaped by nation-states, but these states are not immune to ideologies or ethics rooted in religion. The ongoing discourse on the relationship between nationalism, the territorial state, and Islam is complex and inchoate. We may, however, divide Muslim thought on political organization into three broad strands. The first is the statist, championed primarily by secularists. It conceives of state-Islam relations on a spectrum ranging from coexistence in mutually supporting but separate spheres, to actual rivalry and suppression. This secularist school, not surprisingly, remains today very much peripheral to Islamic political discourse.

A second school of "Islamic internationalists," consisting largely of modernist intellectuals, attempts to find some accommodation between Islamic ethical ideals and prevailing international realities. Their argument tends toward the conclusion that while the unified Muslim *umma* is a goal to work toward, the conditions of modern life require acceptance of the utility, if not the morality, of the state system.

A third school of "Islamic cosmopolitans" argues openly that the territorial state has no legitimacy in Islam precisely because it violates Qur'anic ethics and because it is a vestige of European imperialism intended to keep the Muslim community weak. This is an often-recurring theme in fundamentalist writing. Yet the actual characteristics of an "Islamic" international system and the legitimate means to bring it about remain only vaguely elaborated. Aya-tollah Khomeini, for example, often asserted that the Islamic revolution begun in Iran was merely the first phase of a universal Islamic revolution. This revolution was to be propagated through nonviolent means, because, Khomeini argued, Islamic ideology, due to its self-evident truths, did not require enforcement upon anyone. This view, however, did not prevent him or his supporters from actively encouraging other Muslim peoples to emulate the Iranian example of overthrowing the ruling regime. In other words, Khomeini's call for revolutionary struggle in other Muslim states and the Iranian government's active support of such movements reflected a viewpoint grounded in the universality of the Muslim community in opposition to claims of state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and noninterference in domestic affairs. Indeed, it cannot be said that these three principles of international society have been incorporated into an "Islamic" international code of behavior, all governmental declarations to the contrary notwithstanding.

The OIC offers a graphic example of the difficulties inherent in an Islamic assimilation of essentially Western principles. The U.N. Charter, whose principles are incorporated into the OIC Charter, places great emphasis on values of sovereignty and peace, i.e. order, over values of individual or collective rights and justice. As Ali Mazrui has argued, the framers of the U.N. Charter, wittingly or unwittingly, incorporated into the U.N. structure "a Christian tendency to regard peace and 'love' as an answer to the scourge of war." The Islamic ethical system rests not on the commandment to love, but on the injunction to strive for justice.²⁷ By declaring Islamic ideology as the OIC's basis, its founding states ensured that the organization would be open to the competing claims and myriad interpretations of Islamic justice in the modern world. These claims have more often challenged rather than bolstered the principles of state sovereignty upon which the organization was founded.

Ever since its founding, the OIC has been repeatedly assailed by many Muslims, particularly fundamentalists, for failing to act as an instrument of the collective Muslim conscience. Nevertheless, many Muslim activists continue to hope that it may yet evolve in that direction. Hasan Turabi, a leading Sudanese scholar and ideologue of the current "Islamization" campaign in Sudan, writes in an article entitled "Islam as a Pan-National Order":

Even if regional and international official Muslim organisations are devoid of significant Islamic or functional utility [the OIC was heavily criticized for its inaction during the Gulf War], they serve as token and frame to encourage the popular unionist drive. . . . The emergence of Muslim unity will proceed through the opening of the state frontiers towards the emergence of trans-national regional conglomeration and beyond to the pan-Islamic commonwealth in due course.²⁸

Turabi, like all modern pan-Islamist writers, provides little detail on the means whereby this "commonwealth" will be realized or its final structural configuration. The policies of regimes which have openly claimed Islamic legitimacy have thus far done little to realize a trans- or supranational Islamic order. Whether the regime is a conservative monarchy such as the Saudi Arabian, or military-authoritarian such as the Pakistani under Zia al-Haq or the contemporary Sudanese, or revolutionary such as the Iranian, the state has not only been the vehicle of Islamization; Islam quickly became the vehicle of further state-building. And even among the multitude of Islamic groups vying to supplant the nationalist regimes ruling other Muslim states, there is little beyond rhetoric to suggest that they will fundamentally reconstruct the Muslim state system once they come to power. There is certainly no hint of an "Islamic international" to coordinate the revolutionary overthrow of "un-Islamic" regimes.

Still, the ideal of a united Muslim world remains—however inchoate—a central aspect of the normative framework of Islamic activism. The question of how this pan-Islamic vision will be realized does not concern the activists because just as the socialist state was to have withered away, leaving the communist utopia, so will the triumph of truly Islamic regimes lead to the re-creation of the unified Muslim *umma*. Secular nationalism will collapse, suggests Mahmud Zahhar, a Palestinian Hamas leader, under the weight of its own contradictions within the Islamic context. Islamic movements such as Hamas will be ready at that moment to lead the Muslim world to an authentically Islamic political order:

Back in the days when our communication and means of transport [were] the camel and donkey . . . a single caliph in Baghdad or Damascus ruled the entire Islamic world. With the present technology, this rule would be even easier. It brings the international Islamic movement closer together: the Islamic world movement will become one state.

It is enough for the Islamic movement to wait patiently, concludes Zahhar, because "the Islamic movement is gaining everywhere. In the Arab world, there is the street on one side, secular nationalisms on the other. . . . The victory of our project is only a question of time."²⁹

Conclusion

Western theorists of international society are quick to acknowledge the existence of ideological challenges to the state system and alternative world order models. Toward the conclusion of *The Anarchical Society*, Hedley Bull writes: "Like the world international society, the cosmopolitan culture on which it depends may need to absorb non-Western elements to a much greater degree if it is to be genuinely universal, and provide a foundation for a universal international society."³⁰

Dorothy Jones also acknowledges the manifold challenges to, and tensions within, the code of peace. She explores the uneasy coexistence of values such as state sovereignty, social justice, and human rights.³¹ Her discussion and conclusions, however, remain grounded in the view that although these contradictions will be affected by non-state actors and popular pressures, they will be resolved ultimately by *state* actors. The code of peace, therefore, will remain one reflecting the collective, if not the individual, interests and values of the states, and only through them, the interests and values of their people, which "according to one of the tradition's most basic tenets, the states are presumed to represent."³²

For skeptics of international society, the heterogeneity of cultural values leaves little possibility for accommodation or even peaceful coexistence. The most frank elaboration of this position is Samuel Huntington's "policy prescriptions" for a Western civilization confronting "conflict for the immediate future . . . between the West and several Islamic-Confucian states." Even in the "longer term," following a period of active civilizational competition, Huntington sees no possibility of a "universal civilization," only an uneasy coexistence of cultures that agree to disagree.³³

The positions of both the proponents of international society as well as its skeptics are, I believe, problematic with regard to the role of non-Western ideological elements in international society. On the one hand, Bull's statement on the need for expansion of the bases of international society appears to be a reluctant and tenuous concession to cultural heterogeneity. He does not believe it either possible or prudent to consider dramatic alterations of the state system. Jones does not consider the possibility that cultural or ideological traditions may not coincide with the structure or values of sovereign states. This assumption, as this review has attempted to show, is highly dubious in Third World and specifically Islamic contexts.

On the other hand, Huntington rightly emphasizes the significant role of cultural values and interests in contemporary international relations and the continuing (if not more pronounced) importance of religious ideology in the post-Cold War international system. He takes this emphasis to an extreme, however, by positing whole civilizations in ideological rivalry or conflict. Neither civilizations nor the cultural values upon which they rest can be considered holistic.

In this brief review of Islamic civilization and values in international society, I have chosen to focus upon merely one segment of the Muslim popula-

tion, those who pose an active challenge to the international society in which we live today. Yet, as I have argued, even these Islamic malcontents do not reject the idea of international society itself. They do not in general advocate a fundamental assault upon the international system as a whole, or upon its values and institutions beyond the Muslim world, despite their conviction that it serves primarily Western interests. To quote Mahmud Zahhar again: "There is no adversarial relationship between us and the West. The relationship is similar to that between a doctor and his patient. We do not regard the West as an adversary, but as a sick person in need of surgery."³⁴ The malady afflicting the West on the international level, as portrayed in much of the recent Islamic literature, is the failure of Western states to apply impartially and consistently the international law and human rights that they hold to be the basis of international society. Such "double standards" are most glaringly evident in the West's painfully slow response to Serbian aggression against Bosnian Muslims in comparison to its continuing economic and military pressure on Iraq.

The point at which Western policies most diametrically oppose Islamic aspirations is in the Western states' support for the secular-nationalist regimes waging domestic wars of repression against Islamic movements and ordinary Muslims. Khurshid Ahmad writes:

Some of the violence that has unfortunately tainted the behavior of certain Muslim groups in some Arab and Muslim countries is, in fact, a reaction to state terror unleashed by Western-oriented secular regimes against their own people. Yet the sympathy of the West is, by and large, with regimes guilty of terror and oppression, and all its wrath and fury are directed against the errant individuals or groups who are actually victims of state terrorism.³⁵

The Islamic challenge, so often depicted in the West as aggressive or militant, emerges consistently in Islamic literature as a defensive reaction to the violence of the state. The attack upon the universal values of international society, one of the most important being the right of a people to representative government, is being conducted not by the Islamic activists, but by the very states who are the supposed guarantors and enforcers of these values. Thus, the code of peace, which favors the states, may need to make room for a "code of justice."

What will be the future role of Islam in the evolution of international society? Some analysts, such as Fouad Ajami and Thomas Friedman, suggest that the Islamist challenge to secular-nationalist states has peaked and that Islamic movements are being either radicalized to the point of alienating their potential mass constituency, or co-opted to the point that they are hardly distinguishable from the "mainstream."³⁶ Similarly, Olivier Roy has presented a detailed argument for the "failure of political Islam" at both the domestic and international levels.³⁷ These analyses equate political Islam with what has

generally been known as "Islamic fundamentalism." To say that this form of Islamic activism may be waning as a political force aimed at overthrowing secular regimes is not altogether remarkable, because it always represented a small, elitist fraction of the Muslim population within any state. To argue more broadly that the political and ethical goals that Islamic fundamentalism shares with a wider range of Islamic activism are diminishing in importance within the Muslim world would, however, be inaccurate. The weakening of fundamentalism as a political force may, in fact, promote more active and broad-based religious politics in the Muslim world.

Ideas and movements tend to evolve in a dialectical process, with one movement giving birth to its antithesis, which later yields a new synthesis. Islamic fundamentalism grew out of an Islamic revivalist movement whose intellectual origins lay in the modernism and liberalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Early Islamic fundamentalism itself was relatively moderate and reformist in its methods. In response to decades of governmental repression and bolstered by economic mismanagement and administrative corruption, it has, in countries like Iran, Egypt, Algeria, and Palestine, assumed an increasingly violent aspect. The decline of this strand of Islamic activism will inevitably open space within Islamic political discourse for the reemergence of contending, perhaps more liberal or accommodationist Islamic approaches ("neomodernism"?) which have in recent years been eclipsed by fundamentalism. Ultimately, as long as Muslim societies and international society as a whole confront deep-rooted issues of economic inequalities, social injustice, and ethnic conflict, the Islamic impact will continue to be felt as one part of the broader religious impact on international relations.

Notes

1. There are, of course, a few significant exceptions to this statement. See, for example, Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, eds., *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). The United States Institute of Peace and the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs have also devoted significant attention to religious views in their seminars and publications. Finally, two volumes from the Ethikon Institute include essays on religion in contemporary international affairs: Terry Nardin, ed., *The Ethics of War and Peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); and Terry Nardin and David Mapel, eds., *The Constitution of International Society: Diverse Ethical Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming).
2. See Martin Wight, *Systems of States*, ed. Hedley Bull (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1977); Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); Adam Watson, *The Evolution of International Society* (London: Routledge, 1992); Evan Luard, *Types of International Society* (New York: Free Press, 1976).
3. Jones discerns nine principles of the code of peace by surveying the principal international legal instruments concluded since World War I: 1) sovereign equality of states; 2) territorial integrity and independence of states; 3) equal rights and self-determination of peoples; 4) nonintervention in the internal affairs of states; 5) peaceful settlement of disputes between states; 6) no threat or use of force; 7) fulfillment of international obligations; 8) cooperation with other states; 9) respect for human rights and funda-

mental freedoms. To this list, Jones adds two others, which, though important to the universalization of the code of peace, remain inchoate as universally accepted parts of it: 1) creation of an equitable international economic order; 2) protection of the environment. See Dorothy V. Jones, *Code of Peace: Ethics and Security in the World of the Warlord States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). A précis of her argument is available in Dorothy V. Jones, "The Declaratory Tradition in Modern International Law," in *Traditions of International Ethics*, ed. Terry Nardin and David Mapel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

4. Jones, "Declaratory Tradition," 58.
5. See Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *Atlantic Monthly* (September 1990): 47-58; Robert Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *Atlantic Monthly* (February 1994): 44-65; Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs* 72 (Summer 1993): 22-49.
6. Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, introduction to *The Expansion of International Society*, ed. Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 1-9.
7. Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 317.
8. Huntington, 39.
9. Cited in Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 19.
10. Cited in Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 139.
11. See Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, 279-94.
12. Khurshid Ahmad, "Islam and the West: Confrontation or Cooperation?" *The Muslim World* 85 (January-April 1995): 68.
13. Nikki Keddie defines "Third Worldism" as "a viewpoint that sees the third world (roughly Asia, Africa and Latin America) as exploited and heavily controlled by the West. . . ." Nikki R. Keddie, "Islamic Revival as Third Worldism," in *Le Cuisinier et le philosophe: Hommage à Maxime Rodinson*, ed. Jean-Pierre Digard (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1982), 275-281.
14. Mazrui observes, rightly I believe, that other cultures have either failed to articulate a coherent ideological response to the West or have adapted essentially Western ideologies to their local environments. Hinduism in India and native traditions of Africa cannot be said to represent distinct non-Western political ideologies, despite the sporadic religious appeals made in their names. Confucianism in China has been marginalized by the Maoist version of Marxism. See Ali A. Mazrui, *Cultural Forces in World Politics* (London: James Currey, 1990), 244-245.
15. Abdullah al-Ahsan, *OIC: The Organization of the Islamic Conference* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1988), 18.
16. *Ibid.*, 36.
17. Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Cedar Rapids: Unity Publishing Co., n.d.), 20.
18. Jones, "Declaratory Tradition," 46.
19. See the debate between David Luban and Michael Walzer on the moral standing of the nation-state in Charles Beitz, et al., *International Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).
20. Stephen D. Krasner, "Sovereignty: An Institutional Perspective," in *The Elusive State: International and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. James A. Caporaso (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1989), 79.
21. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), 1:393.
22. See Nikki Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 39.
23. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 2-6.
24. From the Crimean War to 1878, in keeping with its pro-Ottoman policy, Britain encouraged the idea that the Ottoman sultan was caliph of all Muslims among its Indian

- Muslim population. With the accession of Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid II in 1876, its policy shifted toward championing loyalist Indian Muslim elites and institutions as a counter to the sultan's pan-Islamic appeals. Such efforts resulted in a pan-Islamic reaction within India, led by several prominent intellectuals. See Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan, 1857-1964* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 123-131.
25. Interventions by two prominent Indian leaders, Sayyid Amir 'Ali and the Agha Khan, on behalf of the caliph apparently convinced Atatürk that the institution was too great a nuisance for his projected secular republic to bear. See Arnold J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs, 1925: The Islamic World Since the Peace Settlement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927), 57-60.
 26. For a review of Muslim responses to the abolition of the caliphate, see Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 52-68.
 27. Mazrui, 22.
 28. Hasan Turabi, "Islam as a Pan-National Order," *Impact International*, June 12-July 9, 1992, 6.
 29. "HAMAS: Waiting for Secular Nationalism to Self-Destruct. An Interview with Mahmud Zahhar," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24 (Spring 1995): 85.
 30. Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 317.
 31. Jones, "Declaratory Tradition," 54.
 32. *Ibid.*, 60.
 33. Huntington, 48-49.
 34. "Interview with Mahmud Zahhar," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 85.
 35. Ahmad, "Islam and the West," 78.
 36. See Fouad Ajami, "The Summoning," *Foreign Affairs* 72 (September/October 1993): 2-9; Thomas L. Friedman, "Muffled Militants," *The New York Times*, July 19, 1995, A19.
 37. Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).



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