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**“Islamic Agents, Structures, and International Relations:  
Ontology as Faith”**

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**Ph.D. Thesis**

**2013**

**School of Government and International Affairs**

**Durham University**

**Supervised by**

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***Chapter One:  
Literature Review and Plan of Thesis***

The title of this thesis reflects that this project depends on bringing together culturally and intellectually different schools of thought and belief systems. It suggests that towards the aim of developing a theory of Islamic agency in International Relations, an effort of engagement with these different sources of knowledge is fruitful if not necessary, although with a serious risk of “displeasing” the two targeted audiences: the Islamic side and the side of western IR theory. The mere use of the phrase “Islamic agency in international relations” might raise doubts of forcing relationships between incommensurable sources of knowledge and the associated concepts and descriptions. If “Islamic” refers to personal faith in a western sense, and “agency” ascribed to corporate entities like the state, and then “international relations” is defined by interaction among units in a mechanical international system, then it is correct that the phrase “Islamic agency in international relations” does not make sense! However, If we approach Islam as constitutive of reality, at least to its followers, view agency as essentially human with a sense of moral responsibility, the state as a structure that facilitates the exercise of power by agents, not itself an agent, and invite an ontologically “friendly” and normatively rich conceptualization of structure of the modern international society as a context of socialization then a theory of Islamic agency in international relations becomes a possibility.

While the above justification might suggest the targeted debates for this pursuit; the thesis intends to go one level deeper, which is the foundational level where these debates can best be

engaged with. An important initial theme at this level is the exploration of the agency of the Muslim researcher and his/her social activity of producing a theory of Islamic agency in international relations. In turn, searching for foundational justification for the intelligibility of this intellectual and theoretical effort. For example, in her introduction to *“International Relations in Islam”*<sup>1</sup>, Nadia Mustafa, starts with the following Quranic Verse” *And say (unto) them, work, Allah will observe your work, and His Messenger, and the believers”*<sup>2</sup> This implies that she, along with the twenty-seven Muslim scholars and researchers who contributed to the project, had a clear understanding of their own agency as Muslim knowledge seekers<sup>3</sup> morally responsibility before God<sup>4</sup> for their scientific and intellectual activity. The writer of this thesis also happens to be a Muslim IR researcher. I too view my work as an expression of my own agency as a Muslim knowledge seeker. Mine, though, takes place in western academic and disciplinary settings. In this case, and taking the agent-structure relationship seriously, the western/global IR discipline is a structure, and I am an agent. Following, the celebrated recent constructivist wisdom in the sociology of the discipline, it could be concluded that the structures of the discipline constitute my identity and interests: clearly, partly, they do; equally clearly, “not all the way down”. This thesis is a proof that I come to the discipline with an “already” constituted identity and interests as a Muslim knowledge-seeker to which the institutional and knowledge structures of the discipline might conform, or they might not.

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<sup>1</sup> Nadia Mustafa (ed.), *International Relations in Islam*, (Virginia: Islamic Institute for International Thought, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Quran (9:105)

<sup>3</sup> From Islamic perspective knowledge seeking better describes scientific and intellectual activity than knowledge-production since for Muslims knowledge is already produced by Allah (SWT).

<sup>4</sup> For the rest of this thesis the word “God” will be replaced by the word Allah (SWT) as it is written from a first person perspective.

Alternatively, one could follow critical realist wisdom, particularly Roy Bhaskar's notions on the intelligibility of scientific activity,<sup>5</sup> to place the burden on the institutional and disciplinary structures by asking the question, "What must the institutional and knowledge structures of the western/global IR discipline be like in order for a theory of Islamic agency in international relations to take place?"<sup>6</sup> That is, if it was not for the transformation of the disciplinary knowledge structure, including the sociological turn the discipline took and the resultant questioning of a number of ontological assumptions concerning the nature and properties of agency, structures, and their interrelationship, it would have not been possible for this thesis to take the question to the theoretical level and ask, "What must the real structures of contemporary international relations be like in order for Islamic agency to be possible?"

In this thesis critical realism will continue to play this role; the role of a mediator between Islamic foundational knowledge and theoretical and substantive knowledge of western International Relations theory in order to develop a coherent account of Islamic agency that is operationalizable under conceptualizations of structures. A number of critical realist tools and solutions will be utilized in this effort including solutions and articulation of the agent-structure debate. To Muslim audiences, this could be seen as a harmful move to the normative basis of Islamic agency given the constraints usually placed on agential moral action within the agent-structure framework. Moreover, the fact that the agent-structure is a western sociological tool is enough to raise suspicion for many Muslim observers. I argue that the issue is not the western origin of this tool, since the part of reality that this tool captures has expressions in all cultures and civilizations, only that the agent-structure relationship as developed in western social theory

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<sup>5</sup> Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*, third edition, (London: Verso, 2008) p.22.

<sup>6</sup> This formulation is different than the Critical realist formulation, this change is only to reflect the the knowledge production approach as "social activity" which is in line with Critical Realist arguments and will further be explained in chapter tow.



is more “manageable” when it comes to explaining social outcomes. Rather, what should, rightly, raise concerns is that in western academia, especially in the discipline of International Relations, the application of this tool has, almost always, championed structure over agency. The “trick” then becomes one of taking advantage of the explanatory elegance of the agent-structure relationship without falling into the “structural trap”. That is why this thesis, aiming at developing an account of Islamic agency, insists on formulating the question as one of “What must the social structures be like in order for Islamic agency to be possible?” to avoid, the almost “automatic” reversal of roles that results from the question of “ What must agency be like in order for structural explanation to be possible?” the answer to which defines an important part of the ontological landscape where IR theories operate, that, in turn, allows/forces IR theorists to shape and shove agency in order to fit structural solutions. What this practice does is that it locates intelligibility in structures and its effects and forces necessity on agency and its capacities; the opposite of Islamic views of the social world, where intelligibility is an agential quality while necessity is a structural quality. This tension could be further explained in terms of the distinction between moral and causal responsibilities where the latter has been the focus of positivist western social sciences including International Relations, and the former has been emphasized by Islamic thought.

Together, Islamic knowledge and descriptions of reality, critical realism, and western International Relations theory are the main three ingredients of this thesis. The relationship between them will be conditioned by an essential argument that will be explored in chapter two; that is, a theory of Islamic agency needs the agency of the Muslim IR researcher. For now, this means that this thesis will take a first person perspective, in the sense of treating Islamic knowledge as foundational, critical realist notions as tools to better express Islamic worldviews

and perspectives to western audiences, and to set the right contexts for engagement with western IR theory, basically creating a clear hierarchy among the three sources of knowledge. This relationship in turn will come to underline most of the analytical logic of the thesis, not only linking chapters together but also arguments within each chapter.

Of course, one possibility for this project was to leave Islamic action separate from its broader context. In other words, to approach it as a “Foreign Policy Analysis” project and give it the title of, for example, “The Determinants of Foreign Policy of Islamic states,” avoiding the epistemological and ontological contexts of research. Yet, it would have not been “wise” not to take advantage of the sociological turn that occurred in the discipline despite the associated risk of embarking on the unfamiliar ground of expressing Islamic views on the social world through western sociological tools and subsequently the inconvenience of using different terms and the discomfort it could bring to the highly normative views about the role of Islamic actors in international relations.

The context of the choice of making this project an International Relations project and not an FPA one can be captured by Vendulka Kubalkova’s discussion on the relationship between FPA and IR. For her the study of International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis continue to be separated, intellectually disconnected, and even in some respects contradicting each other’s assumptions and conclusions.<sup>7</sup> She explains further that the separation occurred during the second debate, or the behaviorist/traditionalist debate, where FPA came out more “scientific” with its emphasis on the observation of the behavior of actors, an emphasis, that, according to her, had the tendency of allowing FPA scholars to leave Foreign Policy out of its broader

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<sup>7</sup> Vendulka Kubalkova, *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World*, (London: M.E.Sharpe,2001) p.17

context.<sup>8</sup> It could be argued that the bulk of theoretical efforts on Islamic agents in international relations have followed the same path by focusing more on the duties and obligations of Islamic political leadership and much less on the structural constraints/opportunities that condition their actions in the international arena. While in FPA this practice was followed for the sake of “science”, in Islamic thought it was for the sake of preserving the “purity,” or normative basis, of Islamic agency from the structural constraints on moral actions in the social world.

Still, I believe that the advantages of this tool are worth the risks. Thanks to the maturity of the agent-structure debate in International Relations, there now exists a number of solutions that specify the sources of both moral responsibility of agents and causal responsibility of structures, hence, preserving the “normative basis” of Islamic agency, while enhancing the explanatory power of an Islamic framework to explain the constraints and opportunities of their context of embedment.

Although this thesis operates at a highly abstract level and aims at engagement at a foundational level, nevertheless, an assessment of the relevance of this attempt to the cotemporary discourses on Islamic actors and their behaviour in international politics should be helpful. Aside from the approach that this thesis wishes to develop, there are two main competing discourses on Islamic involvement in contemporary international politics today, one is normative and legalistic produced and reproduced by traditional (Shari’ah-based) Muslim Scholars,<sup>9</sup> while the other is political realist and secularist sustained mainly by political analysts drawing on, more than anything, strategic and security studies. In between the two, well-intentioned Islamic actors and foreign policymakers seem to be dissatisfied with the partial image each has to offer. Where the

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<sup>8</sup> Kubalkova, *Foreign Policy in a Constructed World*, p.17.

<sup>9</sup> See for example, Mohammad Abu-Zahra, *International Relations in Islam* (Cairo: Dar Al-Fikr Al-Arabi, 1964), and Mohammad Baboush, *Islam and International Relations*, (Rabat: Dar Al-Fikr Al-Dawleyyah, 2000).

former has taken the shape of disconnected *fatwas* and rulings that lack an appreciation of the structural constraints/resources affecting moral actions at macro social arrangements like those of the modern international society, the latter, only “sees” structures in their most deterministic, materialist sense of the concept, subsequently following the realist assumption that there can never be a space for moral action in international relations, and hence the focus is on a narrow range of day-to-day strategic moves. This approach, which is based on purely realist assumptions, does not, and cannot, serve as a convenient departure point for capturing the involvement of Islamic actors in international politics since, at least to my eyes, an Islamic actor is a moral actor by definition. No matter how thick the Islamic symbolic and discursive cover, if an actor is not moral he/she is not Islamic. In other words, the label “Islamic” does not do the trick!

For this reason my inclinations lie with the traditional Islamic based normative/legal approach. This approach, while lacking theoretical understanding of contemporary international relations and the necessary methodological techniques to sustain a research programme on the subject matter, does preserve the essence of Islamic agency, and equally important, ensures that whatever explanatory tools we utilize in our research are governed by Islamic knowledge sources: Quran and Sunnah. Consequently, what this approach needs is a theoretical framework that can contribute to approaching Islamic action in international relations in a balanced way, emphasizing agential moral accountability on the one hand, and structural constraints and resources on the other. The remainder of this chapter reviews the literature that will be drawn from in this thesis with an eye on the analytical purpose of bringing together and exploring possible venues of engagements between different sources of knowledge in a way that ensures a smooth pursuit of developing a theory of Islamic agency in international relations.

### *Agency in Islam: from Politics to Ontology*

The amount of works on “religion and international relations” that has been produced in western academia during the last two or three decades is more than can be counted for in this chapter. While religious traditions and movements like conservative Christians in the U.S, and the Hindu traditions in India have drawn some attention, the bulk of these efforts have been directed towards Islam as the most visible and active religious force at the start of the Millennium. Most of these works, however, have engaged Islam on substantive issues including use of force, universal human rights, and even climate change,<sup>10</sup> depending on the IR framework, if any, dictating the engagement.

By now, it should be clear that this thesis strongly argues that Islamic engagement concerning any social arrangement including international relations should commence at the ontological level. Otherwise, by conceding ontological ground to the philosophical foundations of IR, the Islamic perspective misses the opportunity to argue about a number of important issues including the role of human agency in international relations, anthropomorphizing the state, and the content and effects of structures of international relations. To be sure, Muslim scholars and researchers have not shown much interest in these issues, not for the sake of explanatory convenience as in the case in western IR theory, but for the sake of preserving the normative grounds of theorizing about Islamic involvement in international politics. In other words, if there is a concern in western IR theory about, for example, bringing in human agency because of all

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<sup>10</sup> See for Example, Boroujerdi, Mehrzad, *Mirror for the Muslim Prince: Islam and the Theory of Statecraft*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013), Berger Maurits, *Religion and Islam in Contemporary International Relations*, (The Hague: Clingendael Institute, 2010), and Baderin, Mashood, *International Law and Islamic Law*, (London: Ashgate, 2008).

the “mess” it could cause to theoretical parsimony and the manageable search of causal responsibility in a closed system, the concern in the Islamic side has been one of exposing Islamic actors to material or ideational deterministic structures and losing sight of moral responsibility before *Allah* (SWT). This mirrors a distinction between the two traditions and their understanding of agency, not only in international relations but in the social world in general, where the latter emphasizes human sources of agency while the former focuses on the institutional/corporate sources of agency. Aside from the natural tendency of religions in general and Islam in particular to give an appropriate space for human moral responsibility which is lacking in secularist accounts of agency, the following discussions argue that the lack of appreciation of institutional sources of agency in traditional Islamic thought and politics is due to certain historical developments that impacted on the relationship between the “intellectual” and the “political” resulting in halting Islamic institutional development in both theory and practice.

### *Between the Caliph<sup>11</sup> and the Scholar*

There is no escape from some history when trying to place this thesis in an Islamic intellectual context. Moreover, a choice has to be made regarding a suitable starting point that represents an interaction between theory and practice, or political reality and knowledge production in Islamic history. Following Abu-Sulayman, in his book *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, the events of the “great *fitnah*”<sup>12</sup> (infighting) will serve as such a starting point.<sup>13</sup> In Islamic history, the great *fitnah* refers to a series of destructive civil wars among Muslims where the third Caliph *Othman Ibn Affan* was martyred, as was his successor *Ali Ibn Abi Talib*. Eventually, The Caliphate, at

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<sup>11</sup> Caliph in Arabic Language refers to the political leader of the Islamic Ummah or nation.

<sup>12</sup> A word on transliteration: In my efforts to make the text as unencumbered as possible I have endeavored to spell the Arabic words according to the way they are pronounced.

<sup>13</sup> AbdulHamid Abu-Sulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, (Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought: 1997) p.22.

least in practice, came to an end, and was replaced, according to Abu-Sulayman, by the profligacy, despotism, and tribalism of the new rulers of the Ummayah royalty<sup>14</sup>. Subsequently a change in the political base accrued within Muslim lands that, in turn, resulted in a rift that occurred between the political leadership on the one hand, and religious and intellectual leadership on the other.<sup>15</sup> The religious and intellectual leadership, mainly the companions of the prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and their students, located in Hejaz (Today's western Saudi Arabia), refused to accept the reality and the reasons of the new changes. After some resistance, members of the religious and intellectual leadership retreated and sought refuge far from the political leadership. This rift between political and intellectual leaderships led to the removal of intellectual leadership from all practical and social relationships from society, and equally, depriving the political leadership of a viable intellectual base capable of serving it in the face of changing circumstances and providing it with ideas, policy guidelines, and workable alternatives.<sup>16</sup> In this context, intellectual and theoretical efforts seeking Islamic solutions in governance and policy-making necessarily lacked sustainability, especially in developing institutional solutions featuring structural constraints on individual political leaders, mirroring political realities that did not witness such constraints. Instead, moral judgment of individual leaders and their sense of accountability before *Allah* (SWT) were the source of political action.

The lack of institutional constraints was not an issue, at least in practical terms, before the events of the great *fitnah*, given the high moral standard of the four companions of the prophet Mohammad (PBUH), who assumed political leadership after his death. The following saying by Omar Ibn Al-Khattab, the second Caliph, demonstrates this point: "By *Allah*, if a mule tripped

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<sup>14</sup> Abu-Sulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, p.23.

<sup>15</sup> Abu-Sulayman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, p.25.

<sup>16</sup> Abu-Sulyman, *Crisis in the Muslim Mind*, p. 27.

over and fell in Iraq, I would be afraid that *Allah* (SWT) would ask me: “Oh Omar, why did not you level up the road up to it”<sup>17</sup> This sense of moral accountability before *Allah* (SWT), was also accompanied by a sense of political responsibility before the Muslim Society. Again, the second Caliph, in a public speech, and in a rather illustrative example, said, “What do you people say if I turned to this worldly life like this “moving his neck submissively to the left”, one of the audiences replied, then we will move your neck back like this “swinging his sword to the right side”, Ibn Al-Khattab replied” All praise to *Allah* (SWT) who made among you those who would correct me when I’m wrong.”<sup>18</sup>

After the events of the great *fitnah*, however, the lack of institutional constraints on political leadership was not a result of deep trust in the morality of human agents who filled this role. Rather, it was a result of a political context that did not allow such constraints to develop. While there have been many works that specified the moral and ethical basis of the relationship between political leadership and society, the recognition of those rules were, again, left to the sense of moral responsibility of the individual leaders. *Al-Ahkam Al-Soltania* (Governmental Rules) by Abu Al-Hasan Al-Mawardi, *Al-Siyasah Al-Shar’iyah Fe Islah Alra’ae wal-Raiaeyyah* (Shari’ah-based politics towards the goodness of the ruler and the ruled) by Ibn Taimiya, *Nasehat Al-Molk* (An Advice to Kingship) by Abu-Hamid Al-Ghazali, and *Solouk Al-Malek Fe Tadbeer Al-Mamalek* (The behavior of the ruler in managing kingdoms) by Shehab Al-Din Abi Rabia’, are considered cornerstones in Islamic political theory, and while the bulk of these efforts were directed at advising Muslim rulers in certain moral behaviour according to Islamic legal and normative principles, they ultimately resulted in a body of knowledge that goes beyond discussion of individual and specific rulers, to what could be viewed as a descriptive and

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<sup>17</sup> Essam Shabarro, *Early Arab Islamic State*, (Beirut: Dar Alnahdha Alarabiyah, 1995) p.30.

<sup>18</sup> Shabarro, *Early Arab Islamic State*, p.77.



evaluative literature on Islamic governance. On an ontological note, most of these works treated the “Caliph” as a social role divorced from the actual human individual who filled this role. Again, ontology as understood today, was not the theme. Instead, normative and legal considerations were the essence of these contributions. Al-Mawardi’s book, in particular, offers what could be described as a rich legal framework that governs the relationship between the ruler and the Muslim Society, while Abi Rabia’s book includes in-depth discussion of how norms, understood in their evaluative sense, can contribute to governance on the one hand, and harmony among different races within the Islamic *Ummah* on the other. These legal and normative based political thoughts on rules and norms did not develop into institutional solutions and in turn into an institutional dimension of agency because of the vitality of the political context that did not allow much accumulation of knowledge on Islamic institutions or governance without disruption from political leadership. For example, while Al-Mawardi’s work did not appear until after his death, for concern of political prosecution at a time of political unrest, Abi Rabia’s book was a result of an invitation from the Al-Mo’tasim, an early Abbasside Caliph, to write a book for him as a policy guideline at a time when the Islamic empire was seen as truly an “international state”.<sup>19</sup>

Given this discussion, it could be concluded that human agency remained the essence of social action in Islamic political thought, while the Caliphate as a political institution and the Caliph as a social role did not exactly develop as central theme for Islamic political thought because of the fact that, while acknowledged, they were subordinate to the human individuals who embodied this role. The focus was on the attributes, characters, and ethics of the human agents who filled

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<sup>19</sup> Hamed Abdullah AL-Rabi, (Introduction and review of *Solouk Al-Malek Fe Tadbeer Al-Mamalek*: 1983) p. 27

this social role. This meant, in turn, that agency in Islamic thought was mainly human not corporate.

That said, it is important to mention that within the wider socio-political context of Islamic knowledge-seeking on governance the Islamic world held global moral authority and was considerably more advanced than other civilizations and societies. In other words, the balance of ideas and power was on the side of the Islamic empire, of course, taking into consideration that the “global” level did not feature a thick enough inter-subjective layer to confirm Islamic dominance, nor construct an Islamic “international society”. In any case, while this Islamic dominance gave Muslim political theorists another reason to ignore structural forces, this time at the global level, their division of the world into three spheres, *Dar Al-Salam* (lands of peace), which includes all Muslims, *Dar Al-Ahd* (lands of truce/treaties), including lands of non-Muslims who enjoy peaceful relations with Muslims, and *Dar Al-Harb* (lands of War) including lands where “enemies of Islam” lived, indicates that global macro arrangements have always been part of Islamic thought. Yet the emphasis on human agency and individual political leaders suggests a gap between micro practices of human agency at the state/governance level and macro arrangements at the global level. This gap seems to be addressed by Muslims thinking along the lines of contemporary IR instrumental solution of the “as if” argument, where in the name of theoretical necessity and abstractions the agency and actions of individuals are fictionally ascribed to the corporate political body that they act within.

This fictional move was not only theoretically useful but also normatively safe; it was normatively safe as much as it is safe today to fictionally assign agency to western states. To clarify, the “useful” fiction of assigning action to states does not only involve abstraction but also assigning agential capacities from “lower” micro agents (bureaucracies, statesmen, etc.) to a

macro whole (state) in order to link this whole, theoretically, to yet higher macro social arrangement (international system/society). The issue, however, is that along the way, this effort faces two choices: one is to leave behind agential capacities like intentionality and moral assessment, or to force them on corporate and institutional entities like the state. Once these “state agents” are linked to their structures, the poverty of agential capacities start to show, especially when the normative dimension of structure is taken into account. In other words, the “useful fiction” does not stop at assigning agency to the state, but also covers the interaction between state agency and its structure in terms of intentional reproduction/transformation of structural meanings. When the identity of the state is in line with structural norms as in the case with modern international society and western liberal states, or the Islamic caliphate and its context then it is a useful and safe fiction, when this is not the case as in the interaction between contemporary Islamic states and the modern international society then the fiction is neither useful nor safe since the outcome of this practice could lead to leaving behind all agential capacities that make an agent “Islamic” when operationalized under structures.

The label “Islamic” is still instructive in this context since the literal meaning of Islam is Submission to *Allah* (SWT). If we can think of automatic construction of identity and interests as a kind of submission of agency to forces of construction of man-made structures, then the difficulty of conceptualizing Islamic agency in international relations becomes clearer. How are we able to capture the agential balance between human agents, or statesmen, who submit to *Allah* (SWT) in terms of their sense of moral accountability before Him being the source of their action, and between the state, itself a structure that is “submitted” to the constitutive man-made norms and institutions of the modern western-originated international society? These complexities of the need to cross an ontological distance to maintain links with macro social

arrangements without leaving behind essential micro human agential qualities suggest that an Islamic account of agency need to transcend politics to ontology in order to specify what is human and moral on the one hand, and what is corporate and causal on the other.

### *From the Caliph to the Khalifah*

Although the two terms “Caliph” and “Khalifah” are pronounced in Arabic similarly, they mean two different things. As mentioned in the previous discussion, the “Caliph” is a political role, in Islamic literature it refers to the successor of the prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in leading the Muslim *Ummah*. This alone might explain why some literature gave the role a sacred quality resulting in “discomfort” when theorizing the institutional dimension and structural constraints on the “Caliph,” despite clear limitations on his powers in higher Islamic sources. Supporting this argument is the humility of the first Caliph *Abu-Bakr Al-Sidiq*, when faced with the title “Caliph” or the successor of the prophet Mohammad (PBUH), declaring that he cannot bear the expectations of moral standards of being the successor of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), and instead requested to be called *Amir Al-Mo'mineen* (The leader of the believers).<sup>20</sup> The “*Khalifah*” on the other hand is a Quranic description of human agency, the interpretation of which by mainstream Muslim scholars is “Vice-regent” or “deputy” of *Allah* (SWT).<sup>21</sup> It is an eternal role that is inclusive of every human being: in other words, everyone is a “*Khalifah*” let it be a Caliph, statesman, parent, or an IR researcher. This description appears most clearly in the following verse “*Behold thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vice-regent (Khalifah) on earth." They said "Wilt thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?"*

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<sup>20</sup> Shabarro, *Early Arab Islamic State*, p.21.

<sup>21</sup> See for example, Ibn-Katheer, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-Karim* [Interpretation of the Holy Quran], and Al-Qurtobi, *Al-Jami' Le Ahkam Al-Quran*, [The Comprehensive guide to Quranic rules].

*Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?" He said: "I know what ye know not".<sup>22</sup>*

It should be mentioned that this interpretation of the verse and by extension its ontological and political implications are contested. The debate on whether the “Khalifah” is meant in the Quran to give a description of human beings as vice-regents and deputies of Allah (SWT) on earth goes back to early Muslim scholars and continues to attract late Muslim scholars on both sides of the debate. The other popular interpretation is that “Khalifah” in this verse describes the generational quality of human existence, that they succeed each other, or that the human race itself succeeded other species on earth like angels. Both interpretations, the one that relates human beings to Allah (SWT) as his vice-regents, and the one that relates them to each other or other species appear in a number of traditional and modern authoritative interpretations of the Quran. For example, the former interpretation appears in *Al-Tafseer Al-Kabeer wa Mafateh Al-Gayb* by *Fakhr Al-deen Al-Razi*.<sup>23</sup> And interpretation of Quran by Ibn Al-Qayyem Al-Jawzi Who bases this interpretation on sayings of Abdullah Ibn Masoud, a companion of the Prophet (PBUH).<sup>24</sup> The latter interpretation is associated with Ibn Taymiyyah, another authoritative figure in Islamic Fiqh, especially to the Salafi brand of Islam. Ibn Taymiyyah’s reasoning is based on the idea that vice-regency is a relationship that assumes the absence of the one who gives authorization for this role and mission, and Allah (SWT) is always present.<sup>25</sup> A contemporary counter-argument comes from Sabri Mohammad Khalil in his book *The Political Dimensions of Estekhlaḥ*, who argues that the presence of Allah (SWT) should not be limited to human beings’ understanding

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<sup>22</sup> Quran (2:29)

<sup>23</sup> Fakhr Al-Deen Al-Razi, “Al-Tafseer Al-Kabeer Wa Mafateh Al-Ghayb”, (Beirut: Dar Al-Kotob Alilmeyyah, 2004). Part 26, Page 199.

<sup>24</sup> Ibn Al-Qayyem Al-Jawzi, “Moftah Al-Saadah”, (Cairo: Dar Al-Ahd Al-Jadid, 1999) p. 123.

<sup>25</sup> Mohammad Ibn-Taymiyyah, “Usoul Al-Tafseer”, (Beirut: Dar Al-Quran Al-Karim: 1991) p.102.

or comprehension of time and space and accordingly vice-regency should not imply the absence of Allah (SWT).<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, the debate continues among contemporary Muslim Scholars with more orthodox and Salafi scholars like Mohammad Ibn Othamain and AbdulAziz Bin-Baz in Saudi Arabia adopting Ibn Taymiyya's more prudent interpretation. On the other side, however, Muslim Scholars associated with the International Institute of Islamic Thought, most prominently Omar Al-Farouqi accepts the "Khalifah" as pointing to a relationship of vice-regency and a description of human beings as deputies of Allah (SWT) on earth. The list also include other contemporary prominent Muslim Scholars like Rachid Al-Gannoushi and Yousif Al-Qaradawi,<sup>27</sup> the latter in particular accepts the usefulness of this interpretation as long as it is meant to, first, give a dignified description to human beings versus more material philosophies on human role and needs. Second, it should demonstrate that human beings do not enjoy absolute and complete sovereignty on earth but are accountable for their actions before Allah (SWT). Third, that human beings must have been endowed with the necessary capacities to act as vice-regents of Allah (SWT) on earth.<sup>28</sup>

As will be demonstrated in chapter three all three points made by Al-Qaradawi will feature in the use of the "Khalifah" to develop a theory of Islamic agency in the social world. For now, however, it is sufficient to say, that this thesis will adopt a vice-regency based interpretation of the above verse, first, because of the fact that while it is disputed it is based on interpretations of a number of authoritative Islamic figures both traditional and contemporary. And second because of its apparent ontological and sociological values as will be shown later in this thesis.

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<sup>26</sup> Sabri Mohammad Khalil, "The Political Dimensions of Estekhlaf", (Khartoum: Khartoum University: 2001) p.3.

<sup>27</sup> See Rachid Al-Gannoushi, "Discussions on Secularism and Civil Society", (Amman: Dar Al-Forqan, 1999), and [www.qaradawi.net](http://www.qaradawi.net) (Can we call human beings vice-regents of Allah?).

<sup>28</sup> [www.qaradawi.net](http://www.qaradawi.net) (Can we call human beings vice-regents of Allah?)

With this in mind, two points can be, further, derived from this verse: first, is the constitutive power of vice-regency, or *Estekhlaf* (noun for Khalifah) through the phrase “I will create”, which when mentioned in the Quran indicates the unchanging nature and properties of that being described. Second, is the all-encompassing context which could be understood from the phrase “on earth”. Together, they could serve the important function of allowing conceptualization of Islamic agency in international relations to escape the narrow political context of the “Caliph” to the wider ontological context of the “*Khalifah*.” The implications of this move from the “political” to the “ontological” in developing a theory of Islamic agency will be thoroughly explored in chapters three and four. For now, the point to keep in mind is that this move will take the arguments made in this thesis to deeper levels than the theoretical and substantive levels by bringing in an Islamic alternative to the understanding of the nature, properties and role of human agency, and will reclaim the constitutive context where they are embedded, subsequently placing a burden on man-made social and institutional arrangements to conform to *Estekhlaf*. This contrasts with the political burden placed on the Caliphate.

A contemporary literature on the Islamization of knowledge is worth mentioning at this juncture. This literature is the focus of scholars associated with the International Institute of Islamic Thought. They target ontological and epistemological bases of western social sciences with the aim of developing Islamic alternatives. Their project aims at challenging western knowledge production on the totality of the social world, instead of one discipline at a time. However, in terms of specific disciplines, Muslim Scholars operating within this trend have, clearly, made more progress in Economics and Finance, although International Relations remains high in their agenda where the project of *International Relations in Islam*, mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, remains a cornerstone in developing an Islamic alternative understanding of

contemporary international relations. The fourteen-volume project offers a variety of tools and insights that can contribute to the development of Islamic worldviews into coherent theoretical frameworks that can better explain contemporary international relations through an Islamic lens. The project, however, seems to be produced, expectedly, with mainly Muslim audiences in mind. Accordingly, most of the discussion is centered around the "know-how" of dealing with sacred texts (Quran and Sunnah) and Islamic history in order to extract Islamic worldviews, and legal/normative principles as bases for theorizing international relations from an Islamic perspective. It goes beyond traditional Islamic approaches mentioned above in a number of respects, including changing the context from the political and normative to the sociological and the ontological, even if not explicitly. Moreover, while the concepts of *Khalifah* and *Estekhlaf* have featured in their work, they have not been sufficiently utilized to offer an Islamic ontological alternative that can hold or underlie the design and construction of different institutional and social arrangements, not even a workable alternative concept of agency that can survive operationalization under social structures.

One exception is the work of Mustafa Manjoud, who provides a conceptualization of the Islamic state rooted in a framework of what he coins "political *Estekhlaf*",<sup>29</sup> a notion which he derives from the general ontological Islamic principle of *Estekhlaf*. His work will be utilized and drawn from in chapter four, only after specifying the nature and properties implied by describing human agency as *Khalifah*. Also since he does not offer guidance on operationalization of the political *Estekhlaf* based state under structures of contemporary international relations, another effort in this respect will be needed, this time, after, first, "sharpening" his conceptualization of the state through engagement with western ontological understandings of the state, namely, the debate

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<sup>29</sup> Mustafa Manjoud, 'The Islamic state as the Unit of Foreign Relations in Islam, in Nadia Mustafa's 'International Relations in Islam, (Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought: 1996) p. 78.



between Alexander Wendt and Colin Wight on the ontological status of the state,<sup>30</sup> and, second, after claiming “earth” as a “field of Estekhlaf” and placing the structures of modern international relations therein. In his defense, as mentioned before, Manjoud’s work was targeting mainly Muslim audiences and this might explain why very little effort, if any, was directed towards operationalization of his “Islamic state” under a western conceptualizations of structure.

Ultimately though, Muslim International Relations students and researchers, even those who aim at producing Islamic based knowledge on Islamic involvement in contemporary international relations will have to encounter western IR theory, for the simple reason that while it is a western project it continues to be projected as a global one claiming, often explicitly, the capacity to capture universal and general laws of international relations. Yet, in today’s Muslim World it seems that the days of celebrating unexamined processes of westernization are gone, where the internalization of western norms by states, and the adoption of IR text books by political science/International Relations departments are increasingly becoming subject to more critical examination. In other words, and in layman’s terms, the processes of internalization today are increasingly conditioned by the question, “What does Islam says about this?”

As a universal message, there is a built-in feature in Islam that energizes its followers to seek global moral authority, or, at least, to preserve their own in their societies. In contemporary international relations, the social structures of the modern international society seem to be the place of this struggle, since this is not only where rules and norms of interactions among culturally distinct societies are reproduced, but also where rules and norms within societies are diffused. The point is that after centuries of the shift of global moral authority from the Muslim

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<sup>30</sup> Alexander Wendt, ‘The State as Person in International Theory’, *Review of International Studies*, Vol.30, No.2 (April 2004), and Colin Wight, ‘State Agency’ *Social Action without Human Activity?* *Review of International Studies*, Vol.30, No.2 (April 2004).

World to the west and the fact that with every major normative argument the west “wins” or imposes an institutional layer is “inserted” in the structures of the modern International Society that reflects those normative arguments. Agency could be seen as a suitable point of departure for theorizing international relations from an Islamic perspective, but then, how can one “free” Islamic agents without an encounter with western understandings of the constitutive forces of structures?

### ***IR: Global Discipline on Western Ontology***

There is no doubt that this thesis is produced at a time of increasing reflexivity in the discipline, a good amount of which is directed at assumptions of universality and generality of mainstream IR theory. This self-questioning phase in the discipline seems to go well beyond theoretical and methodological dialogues between European and American IR communities that took place during the 90s of the last century. Instead the recent wave goes beyond the west in searching for distinct non-western voices in IR scholarship. Both sociology of science and post-colonialism continues to guide these efforts. Barry Buzan and Acharya’s *Non Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives On and Beyond Asia*, and Tickner and Weaver’s series *Worlding Beyond the West (International Relations Scholarship Around The world)* are, indeed, serious steps in this direction. In both works, after grounding their contributions in the correspondent literatures, an opportunity is offered to scholars from different cultures, including Muslim ones, to brief the western IR community about the status of their cultural and national IR communities and to suggest fruitful venues of discussions between the two. While a nice gesture, an examination of the assumptions that underline knowledge production in the discipline and assessment of their “friendliness” or hostility to non-western perspectives, in our case, Islamic perspectives are still needed.

In his presidential address to the International Studies Association convention (2003)<sup>31</sup>, Steve Smith offers a critique of western IR theory that locates the discipline of IR in the global scene as a guardian of the interests of western powers despite being presented as neutral and universal. After a reflection on scholars' own agency through a discussion of Weber's notion of "science as a vocation," he goes on to specify ten features of International Relations theory that, in his words, created the world that led to the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>.<sup>32</sup> Despite all being valid and significant points, here I will mention those that have more direct relevance to the purpose of this thesis:

- A- The focus on the state as the unit of analysis, which makes it the moral unit or the moral referent point for International Relations theories.
- B- The power of the notion of a common progression of humanity towards one end-state as exemplified in most accounts of globalization...Ultimately human nature is seen as a constant, which both allows statements about regularities and merges difference into sameness. Under this gaze, "others" are essentially like "Us", and any differences in worldviews or values are seen as evidence of underdevelopment, or the fact that these societies are at an earlier stage of development.
- C- The stress on structure over agency in International Relations theory; the most powerful and popular theories in the discipline are those that explain the behavior of units, usually states, in an international system of states. Such theories compete for explanatory power by their ability to deduce the behavior of states from the system's structures.

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<sup>31</sup> Reprinted as an article: Steve Smith, Singing Our World into Existence: International Relations Theory and September 11th International Studies Quarterly, Vol.48, Issue 03, (September 2004).

<sup>32</sup> Smith, International Relations Theory and September 11th, p.501.

D- The significance of the idea of one universal rationality underlying the most popular theories. Although this is most clearly evident in rational choice theories the assumptions pervade the discipline, precisely because of the power of structural accounts of international relations. The role of structure in constructing the identity and interests of the actors is linked to the assumption that these actors are forced therefore, via socialization, into accepting a common rationality.

Smith's summarized list serves more than one function at this introductory stage, first, it alerts non-western researchers of the path his/her work is likely to take if they, uncritically, use western IR theoretical frameworks. This could include a Muslim IR researcher wishing to develop a theory of Islamic agency borrowing western IR theoretical tools. Second, it necessarily suggests the targeted assumptions and debates for critical engagement when pursuing such a project. Third, it saves such an effort from, or at least minimizes, unfruitful engagement with more rigid mainstream western IR theoretical frameworks.

Smith's second point, which points to the assumptions of "common progression of humanity towards one end-state" in addition to the fourth point concerning the "forcing of actors via socialization into accepting common rationality because of the role of structures in constructing the identity and interests of those actors," suggest that, if left unchecked, it could take the effort of developing a theory of Islamic agency in international relations to a dead-end. If Islam does not feature in the identity, interests, or behaviour of an agent, then it is not clear what platform is left for Islam to make its impact on an agent.

Moreover, all the assumptions above, especially the first concerning the state as the unit of analysis and by extension the moral referent point, and the third assumption that confirms the

disciplinary preference for stressing structure over agency, suggest that yet deeper assumptions are in play in all the points mentioned above. These concern the agent-structure debate and the traditional version of levels of analysis.

For example, the almost unquestioned methodological choice in the discipline of treating the state as its unit of analysis can only be sustained by settling the agent-structure balance at the state level in favor of structure and thus blocking human qualities and action from making their way to the international level. This demonstrates that in western IR theory there is a tendency to start taking the agent-structure problem seriously at the international level. This further means that important ontological decisions regarding the properties and nature of agents, structures, and their interrelationship has already been made at the state level. A theory of Islamic agency that aims at maintaining a balance between human moral responsibility and corporate causal responsibility in international relations cannot escape this level. Instead it should make its own ontological decisions at the state level. In western IR theory one cannot confidently know whether this is an agent-structure problem or a levels of analysis one; the issue, as Colin Wight points out, is allowing the levels of analysis, a methodological tool, to sketch the ontological landscape of the discipline.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Wight gives the most thorough review of the history and status of the agent-structure debate in International Relations theory; according to him, “the language of agents and structures was alien to IR until recently”<sup>34</sup>, moreover, “debate surrounding the agent-structure problem within IR theory has become confused because it is not always clear that participants in discussion of the issue are talking about the same

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<sup>33</sup> Colin Wight, ‘Agents, Structures, and International Relations: Politics as Ontology’, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p. 102.

<sup>34</sup> Wight, Politics as Ontology, p.72.

problem...Ontological issues are regularly confused with matters of explanation and there is widespread confusion about just what the problem is.”<sup>35</sup>

To remove this confusion, Wight discusses the relationship between three distinct but related problems, the agent-structure problem, the levels of analysis, and the micro-macro problem. He concludes that while levels of analysis is concerned with the appropriate level of explanation of social outcomes in an already predefined social ontology, and hence it is a methodological problem; and the micro-macro problem is concerned with a particular aspect of this predefined social reality that is selected for consideration; the agent-structure problem is analytically prior to both since it is concerned with the nature of agents and structures and their interrelationship. Accordingly, decisions made at this level dictate both the appropriate level of explanation and the mode of investigation.<sup>36</sup>

Given the universal claim of the western discipline, one can safely conclude that non-western agents including Islamic agents have usually been studied within an already-set solution to the agent-structure problem in a pre-defined social ontology. As a non-western IR researcher, particularly a Muslim IR researcher, faced with a discipline that claims global status, the first question he/she could ask is, “why the assumption that “we” share the same understanding of social ontology? The same understanding of levels? Of agency, and structures?” It is this level that this thesis targets before moving on to more theoretical and substantive issues.

Finally, although Smith might have none, or very little, knowledge about the efforts of Islamization of knowledge in international relations, nevertheless his critique saves Islamic efforts a great deal of unnecessary involvement with the more “rigid” mainstream IR theories,

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<sup>35</sup> Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p.90.

<sup>36</sup> Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p.105.

namely, neo-realism and neo-liberalism. One can only imagine placing Manjoud's conceptualization of Islamic state under eternal anarchy that, according to neo-realism causes differentiation of functionality of units to "drop out" of analysis,<sup>37</sup> where not much would be left of the notion of political *Estekhlaḥf*. It is not long in the research process before Islamic agents assume the shape and form of agency in rational choice theory. Moreover, the one-dimensional materialist structure of neo-realism does not seem an appropriate context to capture the realities of moral-based actors, who have a reward structure that transcends material gains in this worldly life and are, supposedly, ready to take costly moral actions to pursue them. This is also a long way from capturing the experience of an Islamic agent in international politics as one of a deceiving "prisoner" or a "chicken" in the worldly games of neo-liberalism.

In any case, these twin mainstream theories do not use the language of agent-structure. Instead, because of their positivist commitment the problem has been addressed as a methodological, not ontological, problem, hence the labels 'methodological individualism' and 'methodological structuralism'.<sup>38</sup> This is not the level of engagement that Islamic perspective as articulated in this thesis wishes for, although it is an important one, the issue is not the relevant weight between agents and structures in explaining a social outcome. Rather, the level of engagement that an Islamic perspective aims at those decisions concerning the properties and nature of agents, structures, and the social world that have already been made through the philosophical foundations of western IR theory which underlie those methodological preferences.

While western social and IR theory should not offer other cultural-based IR research with a predefined ontological landscape, it is also clear that the further we move from mainstream

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<sup>37</sup> Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) p. 109.

<sup>38</sup> Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p.62.

positivist-based IR theories, the more the agent-structure debate in IR theory starts to gain maturity and deeper ontological commitments that seem more attractive for an Islamic perspective to engage with in order to express or map on its understanding of the social world and international relations. Thankfully, more recent attempts to ground IR theories on sound agent-structure ontological solutions have been based on critical realist foundations, including those of Alexander Wendt's, David Dessler's, and Walter Carlesnaes's who share a great debt to both Giddens and Bhaskar in formulating their solutions.<sup>39</sup>

There is something about critical realism that attracts efforts aiming at expressing faith-based views of the social world. In her book *Transcendence: God and Critical Realism* Margaret Archer, writing as a devoted Christian, resembles such attraction in what she describes as “hostile” academic structures where, according to her, “atheism is the intellectual baseline”.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the later works by Bhaskar exemplify this connection and the longing to transcend the positivist set borders of the social world. The inclusion of a chapter on Islamic Sufism, arguably the most emotional/spiritual Islamic philosophy, in his book *Form East to West: an Odyssey of a soul* is indicative of this direction. While more “conservative” critical realists and social theorists in general would not classify such works as strictly social theory, the fact remains that qualities of critical realism like ontological depth and stratification, transitive/intransitive distinction of reality, epistemological relativism and judgmental rationalism, reality of unobservables, and insistence on uniqueness of human capacities, make it the most friendly among western philosophical foundations for faith based theoretical efforts. For this reason critical realism is the choice in this thesis to play the role of the “mediator” between Islamic knowledge and western

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<sup>39</sup> Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p. 77.

<sup>40</sup> Margaret Archer, *Transcendence: God and Critical Realism*, (London: Routledge, 2004) p.5.



IR theory. At times it will be assigned the task of “navigation” across the western ontological terrain but not the task of “guidance” as this is the task of Islamic knowledge.

*State Agency versus Human Agency: Where to place the “Khalifah”?*

Problematizing state agency is a recent trend in IR theory. From an Islamic perspective this is a welcome ontological revision since this debate allows a project like this one to articulate an Islamic position on the status of state agency. It should be clear by now that this effort aims at developing a theory of Islamic agency that, while acknowledging institutional and corporate sources of causality, does not have to omit human agency in the process and with it any sense of moral responsibility at the state level. Fortunately, the debate on “re-opening” the “black box” of the state is, mainly, maintained by two critical realist IR scholars; in a forum that took place on the pages of the *Review of International Studies*, titled “*Is the state a person? Why should we care?*” Alexander Wendt and Colin Wight offer a deep discussion on the ontological status of the state. Of course involvement with works of both authors will not be confined to their contributions in the mentioned forum, since their more comprehensive arguments are to be found elsewhere. For Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* will be the main target since it hosts a complete argument of his notion of “States are people too” where he gives states “body” and “self” of their own by locating, ontologically not artificially, intentions, wants, and subsequently identities and interests.<sup>41</sup> For Wight, his critique of Wendt’s arguments regarding state agency in *Agents, Structures, and International Relations: Politics as Ontology* where he further develops his own theory of state agency will be a major reference.

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<sup>41</sup> Alexander Wendt, ‘Social Theory of International Politics’, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p.221.

Wight describes the state as a “structured organizational and institutional ensemble, which does not and cannot exercise power, but enjoys various capacities inscribed in it. The actualization of those capacities depends on the action, reaction and interaction of agents located within and beyond this complex ensemble”.<sup>42</sup> According to Wight, then, the state does not exercise power but facilitates the exercise of power by human agents. In other words, the powers of the state are only ever activated through the agency of structurally located political actors located in specific structural conjunctures.<sup>43</sup> While both authors claim to base their theories of state agency on a critical realist landscape, it seems that Wight is the more committed critical realist in this debate, since he clearly takes to heart critical realist principles that shape his theory like the distinction between human and corporate agency, and the necessity of the “openness” of social systems. The latter in particular contributes to the complexity of his state theory compared to Wendt simple solution of “closing” the system at the state level.

From this brief introduction, it is clear that this thesis will side with or lean towards Wight’s theory of state agency by aligning Manjoud’s theory of Islamic state to its agential balance that preserves qualities like intentionality and moral responsibility as properties of human agents while conceding causal powers in terms of facilitating and constraining action to the structures of the state. This ontological preference for Wight’s solution should not blind the reader to the analytical necessity of involvement with Wendt’s theory of the state since an Islamic theory of agency needs a target to demonstrate its uniqueness, as much as it needs a more fitted model for expressing its ontological and normative principles on the nature and role of agency in the social world and international relations. Moreover, Wendt’s discussion of the “essential state” in the context of Marx’s state-society structure of political authority and Weber’s organizational actor

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<sup>42</sup> Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p.220.

<sup>43</sup> Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p.220.

do offer convenient venues for demonstrating the Islamic position on the ontological status of the state including the constitutive role of state-society links.

One of the contributions this thesis hopes to make is the possibility of operationalization of a concept of Islamic agency under different conceptualizations of structures in IR, but without losing whatever makes it “Islamic” in its identity, interests, and behaviour, or, even worse, losing what makes it an “agent”: internationality, reflexivity, and capacity for action. To avoid this almost inevitable outcome, once sources of Islamic agency are specified, linked in a coherent way, and the associated methodological and ontological debates are dealt with, then an effort to engage with conceptualization of structures in western IR theory becomes important in order not to “lose it all,” once brought under the casual or constitutive powers of structures.

*Social Structures in English School Theory: Spotting the “fingerprints” of the modern individual:*

Structures are not the main target of this thesis. But the position taken in this thesis is one that insists on the necessity of discussing structural contexts in order to develop a theory of agency. Ontology remains central, yet normative richness is also an important dimension of any context of operationalization of Islamic agency. The use of the term normative is not meant to capture the generic sense of ideas that might allow the tendency to be treated as merely ideas or information, as in the neoliberal conceptualization of structures or even in Wendt’s three cultures of anarchy. Rather, the term normative here is aimed at capturing what Martha Finnemore and

Kathryn Sikkink call “shared moral assessments”<sup>44</sup>, it aims to capture the evaluative or prescriptive quality of norms.

This should not mean, however, that the analytical dimension of norms should be compromised. The exploration of the evaluative versus analytical dimensions of norms have been most recently the focus of theorists associated with the English School Theory.<sup>45</sup> At first sight, the choice to operationalize a concept of Islamic agency under social structures as conceptualized by certain strands of English School Theory can be attractive for the following reasons. Firstly, English School Theory is normatively rich, it is arguably the most “outgoing” western IR theory when it comes to its normative “bias”, especially its solidarist wing. Although the pluralist strand remains more balanced from an Islamic point of view, nevertheless, the solidarist wing is still to be appreciated, strictly analytically speaking, since it offers clear points of engagement with other cultures and civilizations. Second, English School Theory is also historically rich; its story of the evolution and expansion of the international society offers another dimension of engagement with the Islamic narrative of contemporary international relations. Third, the recent vitality of debates on the conceptualization of structure in English School Theory can allow the interrogation of such conceptualization by Islamic ontology. In this light, concepts of structures in English School theory are more easily described as man-made social arrangements than, for example, structures in neorealism. That is, it could be said that “the fingerprints” of the west are still clear on the institutions of the modern international society.

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<sup>44</sup> Marta Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, ‘International Norm Dynamics and Political Change’, *International Organization*, Vol. 52, No. 4, (Autumn 1998) p. 892.

<sup>45</sup> See for example, Barry Buzan, ‘From International to World Society: English School Theory and the Social Structures of Globalization’, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), and John Williams, ‘Structure, Norms and Normative Theory in a re-defined English School: Accepting Buzan Challenge’, *Review of International Studies*, Vol.37, Issue 03 (July 2011).

Together these justifications demonstrate that opening discussions with those who make their normative stands and historical narratives clear is better served by engagement with English School Theory based conceptualizations of structure. Yet bringing a concept of Islamic agency wrapped in a critical realist cover under a structure that is defined by institutions, norms, and constitutive rules might cause discomfort to all sides involved: Muslim IR researchers, critical realists, and English School theorists. To my eyes, this discomfort might be felt the most by the latter camp since it is the one that will be subject to double critique: Ontological from critical realism, and ontological/normative from Islamic worldviews. Also according to the hierarchy of knowledge that results from the choice of maintaining a first person perspective in this thesis, western IR theory, and its representative here, English School Theory, occupy a lower “status” versus Islamic knowledge and critical realism.

Putting the Islamic camp aside for a moment, this also promises an interesting encounter between critical realist ontological principles and English School Theory. The aim will be one of preserving the normative richness of structural accounts of English School Theory while placing it on more sound ontological ground. This will be done both horizontally, and vertically. On the horizontal dimension, the proposal will be one of adding other dimensions to structure, namely, relational, and material in accordance with Wight’s conceptualization of structure as links between Bhaskar’s planes of social activity<sup>46</sup> which will be further explored in chapter three. On the vertical side, the introduction of Islamic elements of agency and the re-arrangements of these elements at the state level will reopen discussions on the depth of alleged constitutive forces of structures and the targeted agential level. Of course most works within the English School Theory do not lend themselves easily to these critiques even recent ones with more structural

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<sup>46</sup> Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p. 174.

awareness. A good example is Barry Buzan's work in *From International to World Society: English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalization*, arguably the most comprehensive recent attempt to enhance the explanatory power of the English School. Buzan borrows Wendt's three levels of internalization of norms by states in order to answer the question: "how and why values are held in place". Where he takes comfort<sup>47</sup> in the fact that Wendt has already done the work on the agential side offering the state as a "stable platform", which to Wendt is a requirement for theorizing about the processes of social construction at the level of states system,<sup>48</sup> only that this practice allows all the ontological problems of Wendt's theory of state agency to feature strongly in his framework. That is, if the internalization and reproduction processes are based on problematic assignment of intentions and wants, then by default, internalization and reproduction of norms that make Buzan's state-system "hang together" are also problematic.

Christian Reus-Smit, another English School Theorist with constructivist leanings, offers another framework that can better suit the aims of this project. In *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations*, he tells the story from the start by rooting the institutional arrangement of the modern international society in a specific understanding of the "modern individual", which, in turn, defines the micro basis of the hegemonic moral purpose of the state as a constitutive element of the modern international society,<sup>49</sup> basically offering a counterpart to Islamic agency at every stage: the individual, the

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<sup>47</sup> Actually Buzan does highlight the problematic aspect of corporate internalization and points out to Andrew Hurrell's work for further exploration of the issue on page 104 of his book but does not comment on the implications of this on his own work

<sup>48</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p.198.

<sup>49</sup> Also see other works by the author that make the same arguments: 'struggles for Individual Rights and the Expansion of the International System, *International Organization*, Volume 65, issue 02, (April 2011), and 'Human Rights and the Social Construction of Sovereignty', *Review of International Studies* Vol.27, No.04, (December 2001).

state, and the international level. In other words, unlike Buzan who focuses on the question “why and how norms are held in place”, Reus-Smit’s framework includes an answer to “Where do norms of the modern international society come from?” The answer to which features an articulation of clear micro-macro links between meanings of human agency and individuality on the one hand, and the institutional structure of the modern international society on the other hand. However, one issue that will need an ontological intervention through critical realist arguments is that his move from the micro to the macro is one dimensional emphasizing norms and values. Instead, as mentioned above, material and relational dimensions will be suggested to complement the context of the encounter between the *Khalifah* and the “modern individual” and subsequently better captures the socialization experience of Islamic agents in international relations.

*Socialization of Islamic agents: from inevitable internalization to freedom of moral assessment*

Of course socialization is one possibility among others to give shape and form to the operationalization of Islamic agency under structures of international relations. The list includes competition, interdependence, natural selection etc. Operationalization, however, is usually associated with process, dynamics, or movement between structures and agents. Thus, its nature and condition should take account of the nature and properties of both agents and structures and the conditions of the relationship between them in a given framework. For this reason, socialization is the choice in this thesis to give process a theoretical and substantive cover given the rich normative encounter that this work is trying to “arrange” between Islamic agency and structures of international relations.

According to Kai Alderson, conceptualizations of the processes of socialization are underdeveloped in IR scholarship; there is no consensus on what it is, who it affects, or how it operates.<sup>50</sup> However, within this literature two assumptions seem to be taken for granted; first, the assumption that socialization inevitably lead to internalization. And second, that socialization of a given agent takes place against reified structure. An argument can be made that these two assumptions are yet rooted in a deeper assumption or practice that is treating socialization as strictly process; instead this thesis will argue that socialization is an agential experience as much as it is a process, or more specifically, it is a process experienced by agents. Subsequently, any work that agrees to consider socialization from an agential side should be open to different outcomes where internalization of norms is only one possibility. Moreover, this agential focus does not only concern the agent understudy, namely, Islamic agents, but other agents involved, stressing the point that the socialization experience of Islamic agents does not take place against a reified structure of the modern international society but mainly against the transformation/reproduction activities and capacities of other agents within a context of productive, relational, and institutional layers of power. In effect this will suggest, a relational understanding of socialization that fits or can be inserted onto the relational dimension of structure. As just mentioned, this relational understanding is not popular in the literature of socialization in western IR theory, although a number of works can be engaged with critically in order to reach an image where the context of socialization is de-reified. The principal work that this thesis will work with is Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink's *International norm dynamics and political change*. While they do not explicitly refer to a relational quality of socialization, their patience in tracing international norms through stages of what they call "norm

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<sup>50</sup> Kai Alderson, 'Making Sense of State Socialization', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 27, Issue 03 (July 2001) p. 416.



life-cycle” gives the effort to capture the socialization experience of Islamic agents the needed time and space to explore the associated mechanisms, actors and motivations at each stage, and further suggest relationships across stages and between main actors in each stage.

The aim is to arrive at a framework where Islamic agents are given a proper experience of making moral assessment and further make alternative normative claims and demands, avoiding what Smith referred to as the progression of humanity towards one “end-state” which they might be reluctant to endorse. Developing a concept of Islamic agency that can swerve from what western IR theory prophesizes as an end-state of humanity is a main aim of this thesis. Along the way, losing the “Islamic” part of “agency” is a real risk with every encounter, from the decision to pursue this theoretical endeavor in a western disciplinary settings, to the encounter with assumptions about state agency, the agent-structure debate, the traditional levels of analysis, the construction powers of structures, and inevitability of internalization of international norms. Yet, with an unswerving Islamic foundational commitment and a few critical realist “tricks,” a theory of Islamic agency in international relations could be possible.

***Plan of Thesis:***

It has become fashionable for theory-based work in IR to start with a discussion on “philosophy of science” where ontological and epistemological contexts are dealt with. If this is viewed as a luxury, then it is a luxury that this project must afford since Islam has its unique sources of epistemology and insists on expressing its worldviews on sound ontological ground. Accordingly, chapter two will lay down the basis for appreciating what it means to be a “knowledge seeker” in Islam, and subsequently explain the agential sources and reward structure of what the role of “Muslim IR researcher” supposedly entails in terms of seeking knowledge of

the social world. An important theme of the chapter will be the relationship between the researcher and the agent under study, which is based on the re-description of the beliefs of such agent. This will set the stage for the main argument of the chapter that a *theory of Islamic agency needs an ontology of the Muslim researcher*.

Chapter three constructs this ontology based on the Islamic notion of *Estekhlaf*. First the structure of *Estekhlaf* that links human agency and the social world to *Allah* (SWT) will be introduced with an emphasis on the resultant constitution of human agency as *Khalifah* and “earth” as field of *Estekhlaf*. The discussion will move to specifying the properties and nature of each through Islamic literature and expressed with the help of western social theory; the role of *Khalifah* will be expressed as endowed, embodied, intentional action, pursuing a mission of *Estekhlaf* that in turn feature three pillars: *Tawhid* (observing the oneness of *Allah* (SWT)), *Tazkiyah* (moral purification), and *Omran* (material development). The field of *Estekhlaf* will be articulated as a home to different man-made social arrangements, featuring the necessary resources to enable human agents to perform their mission. Once grounded in Islamic ontology, the second part of chapter three will express the relationship between the role of *Khalifah*, an eternal role, and worldly social roles that human agents assume in the social world as “point of contact” between agency and different man-made social arrangements constructed on the field of *Estekhlaf*. The target will be one of preparing the *Khalifah* for operationalization in the social world through “filling” or assuming social roles in man-made social structures without losing sight of the totality of the social world as a field of *Estekhlaf*. To express this agential experience, the chapter will propose Bhaskar’s transformational model of social activity as an appropriate agent-structure solution, which preserves agency as intentional embodied action<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p.212.

and conceptualizes structures as contexts of embodiment that features links between inter-subjective, relational and material planes of social activity corresponding to the requirement of the mission of *Estekhlaf* (*Tawhid, Tazkiyah, and Omran*).

Chapter four introduces Mustafa Manjoud's framework of political *Estekhlaf* demonstrating how it is rooted in the general Islamic ontology of *Estekhlaf* before expressing it through Bhaskar's model, which should result in clarifying an agent-structure solution at the state level. Yet taking political *Estekhlaf* to the borders of international relations will require an encounter with the assumption of state agency as understood in western IR theory in order to bring in the elements of political *Estekhlaf* that the ontological barrier of state agency usually blocks from the international level. Wendt's notion of "states are people too" and its underlying ontological assumptions will be articulated as such a barrier, engagement with which should result in rescuing, first, human agency within the state, and state-society links, both important elements of Islamic agency that is rooted in political *Estekhlaf*. At this level, the chapter will propose three sources of agency that should feature in Islamic agency before moving to socialization under international structure; namely, intentionality of human agency at the state level, the casual powers of the corporate state, and the idealist resources of the Muslim society.

The chapter will make use of Wight's critique of Wendt's personification of the state, and will subsequently adopt Wight's theory of the state as an ensemble of institutions that facilitates the exercise of power by human agents located within, which is also built on Bhaskar's TMSA model. The result is a theory of Islamic agency with a political *Estekhlaf*-based "self", a critical realist "body" and an agent-structure solution which ensures the correct balance between the two when socializing in international relations. Bringing in both human agency and state-society links, however, suggests a need for re-examination of micro-macro links and levels of analysis

which the chapter will conclude with, offering a proposed version of the levels of analysis that ensures that both human agency and ideational resources of Islamic society feature in any account of socialization of Islamic agents under international structure.

Chapter five will turn to the context of socialization basically taking the thesis from the ontological level to the theoretical level. As mentioned before the move to the theoretical level will involve a choice of a specific theoretical framework to work with, namely, Reus-Smit's modern international society, an English School/constructivist construct that does not seem to be in line with the ontological package the thesis will develop in chapters three and four. This opens the door to re-examination of this framework in a way that revives the relational and material dimensions of the modern international society. The strategy is one of engagement with Reus-Smit's own theoretical concepts that make up the constitutive structures of the modern international society, namely, a material based hegemonic moral purpose of the state and liberal standards of sovereignty. Such involvement will demonstrate that these two concepts cannot be expressed in purely normative or inter-subjective space and need both relational and material planes of social activities in order to be reflected at the international level. Another task of this chapter is to highlight and sharpen Reus-Smit's micro-macro linkage between western and modern understanding of individuality on the one hand, and the hegemonic moral purpose of the state on the other hand with the aim of demonstrating that international structures, although macro phenomena, are rooted in micro meanings about human needs and purposes. An interrogation of the other basic concept of Reus-Smit's framework, that is liberal standards of sovereignty, will be also offered in order show that it constitutes the relational plane of the modern international society as uneven and hierarchal terrain where agents embodying the role

of “member of international society” are differentiated according to their resemblance to the hegemonic moral purpose of the state and liberal standards of sovereignty.

Chapter six will move to capture the socialization experience of Islamic agents under such structure. It brings together the conceptualizations of both Islamic agency as an *Estekhlaf* based state-society complex rooted in a micro understanding of the individual role of *Khalifah*, and a conceptualization of structure of international relations as the “modern international society” rooted in the micro understanding of the modern individual.

Within this context the chapter will single out three problematic issues within the western literature of socialization; first is the theoretical focus on the structural level while ignoring the agential level, instead the discussion will argue that socialization is an agential experience as much as it is a process generated “from” structure, or more accurately, a process that is experienced by agents. Second is the assumption that socialization of an agent takes place against a reified structure, instead an argument will be made that such experience takes place against the productive, relational, and institutional powers of the “modern individual” or of the states championing this moral purpose, resulting in a relational understanding of socialization. These critiques will subsequently demonstrate the problematic nature of the third assumption of mainstream understanding of socialization; that is the assumption of inevitable internalization. Instead it will be demonstrated that once socialization is better suited to take account of properties and nature of both agency and structure internalization becomes one possibility among others.

The second part of the chapter will look into these possibilities of Islamic response to socialization and international demands to internalize norms. These will include, aside from

internalization: assimilation, rejection, and dissemination. The realization of this wider spectrum of possibilities, however, will be shown to depend on preservation of essential agential qualities, namely, reflexivity, and capacity for moral assessment which any account of socialization should give the needed space and time for their utilization. The chapter will argue that it is these qualities that allow Islamic agents to widen their options by reflecting on the role of *Khalifah* and its two dimensions of endowment and embodiment, and further manage them according to the mission of *Estekhlaf*.

This discussion will maintain a high level of abstraction in order to reflect the macro image of the totality of the Islamic state-society complex embodying the social role of “member of the international society” inevitably resulting in, even temporarily, assigning capacities for action, intentionality, reflection, and moral assessment to this totality. Although defending a limited notion of collective, not corporate, intentionality and action in chapter four, the thesis will still insist on the multi-layered conceptualization of Islamic agency which includes different sources of agency including causal powers of the institutional state, intentional human agents embedded within, and the ideational resources of society, only had to be bracketed for the sake of focusing on process at the international level.

Chapter seven de-brackets and allocates agential tasks to the right agential source through recalling the reconfigured version of analysis as an ontological map which can better capture sources of Islamic agency, namely, the causal powers of the institutional state, the intentionality of Muslim statesmen embedded within, and the ideational resources of society, the utilization of which, according to political *Estekhlaf* and levels of analysis can give a more accurate image of the socialization experience of Islamic agency in international relations.

Accordingly, the capacity of reflexivity will be reallocated to intentional human agents within the institutional state structure, moral assessment to the ideational resources of society, and the causal powers of the institutional state will be burdened with the capacity to make contact with the macro structures of the modern international society. This effectively links all sources of Islamic agency together but without committing any ontological dislocation of properties. The chapter will end with a brief discussion on how this framework can be used to distinguish, yet link, sources of both moral and causal responsibility allowing researchers to focus on each while operating on the same ontological and theoretical grounds.

**Chapter Two:**  
***“Me, Myself and IR Theory: Islam as a Foundational Commitment  
For a Theory of Islamic Agency in International Relations***

Imagine a Muslim IR researcher working in his/her office. It's 12:00 P.M and the call for noon prayers starts. As an average practicing Muslim, he stops working, goes to perform his prayers where he starts with the phrase “*Allah Akbar*” meaning “God is greater,” which he repeats at least twenty times throughout the course of praying, which also involves asking *Allah* (SWT) for guidance to the straight path four times, and placing his forehead on the ground in submission eight times. Once done, he goes back to his office and works on whatever issue-area he was working on whether it is security regimes, international political economy or institutions of international society, using neorealist, neo-liberal or constructivist frameworks. Two hours later, however, again, he stops working to perform the afternoon prayers, then again at the sunset prayers, and again at the evening prayers. This is more than just intense spiritual training that makes the separation between the private and the public almost impossible; phrases like “God is greater”, and “guide us to the straight path” are also ontological; they do not only position the researcher's own agency in relation to *Allah* (SWT), but, equally important, they position the subject matter in relation to *Allah* (SWT). As this Muslim researcher happens to be part of a discipline that supposedly studies macro-arrangements in the social world the connection seems natural, even useful.

Yet, when he attempts to bring in his Islamic-based knowledge to understand and explain the social arrangements of contemporary international relations, he is faced with a number of



epistemological and ontological barriers that “police” the activity of producing or seeking knowledge about the social world in general. Those barriers ensure that whatever ontological “truths” he picked up from his prayer rug do not make it to his desk. Indeed, the Muslim researcher takes a leap of faith when moving from his prayer rug to his desk, but so do positivists, anti-positivists, and post-positivists when moving back and forth between their philosophical foundational commitments and International Relations theory,<sup>1</sup> and in turn reproducing the ontological and epistemological barriers that “police” knowledge production in the discipline. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that a “theory of Islamic agency in international relations” needs a commitment to Islamic foundations by the Muslim IR researcher, including a commitment to Islamic ontology. Reaching this aim necessitates engagement with literature on philosophy of science, and although there is no shortage of such literature in western IR theory, the approach in this chapter is different in that it does not focus on “inter-paradigms wars”,<sup>2</sup> nor the sociology of “community of scholars”<sup>3</sup>. In short the approach is not one that operates “above the heads” of actual individual scholars. Rather, the approach taken in this chapter views epistemological and ontological foundations as agential commitments, preserved, above all, in the “hearts and minds” of individual scholars, and reproduced through their social activity of knowledge production.

This approach is suitable for the task for two reasons; first is the lack, or immaturity, of an academic “community of scholars” endowed with the responsibility of seeking Islamic-based

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<sup>1</sup> Nuno Monteiro & Keven Ruby ‘IR and the False Promise of Philosophical Foundations’ *International Theory*, vol. 1, no.1 (March 2009) p.19.

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Yosef Lapid “The Third Debate: On the Prospects of International Theory in a Post-Positivist Era”, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol 33, (1989). And, Michael Banks “The Inter-Paradigm Debate”, in M. Light and A.J.R. Groom (eds.) *International Relations: a Handbook of Current Theory* (London: Frances Printers, 1985) pp. 7-26.

<sup>3</sup> For regional application of this approach see Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan’s “Non-Western International Relations Theory: Perspectives on and beyond Asia” (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).

knowledge on international relations, where applying more sociological approaches to this environment can be helpful. Second, is the Islamic emphasis on the role and agency of scholars in seeking knowledge; where the ethics and moral responsibility of individual scholars remain the fundamental to any Islamic research programme. Moreover, given the norm-based context of the socialization of Islamic agency, which this project will articulate as, partly, shared moral assessment, epistemic access will always come wrapped in value considerations directed by beliefs and worldviews. Making these values and beliefs explicit is better handled by, or captured at, the level of the individual scholar.

Accordingly, the aim of this chapter is not to explicate the institutional context where authoritative claims of knowledge take place. Rather, the immediate aim is to understand the individual motives and intellectual activities of the Muslim researchers who choose to bring their faith on board. While the former remain an important endeavor and should be the subject for further study it should come after, not before, introducing essential Islamic foundations held by the Muslim researcher. Otherwise the tendency to reach the conclusion that *all* knowledge is socially constructed will be hard to avoid. An Islamic based knowledge on International Relations then should commence at the intellectual and theoretical levels before being subject to sociological treatment especially in a world where social scientists, whatever their belief systems, are assumed to study religion as “methodological atheists,” assuming God plays no causal role in the material world, and anything else would be considered irrational today”.<sup>4</sup> As Jürgen Habermas puts it, “a philosophy that oversteps the bounds of methodological atheism

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander Wendt and Raymond Duvall, “Sovereignty and the UFO”, *Political Theory*, Vol.36, No.4, (August 2008), p.612.

loses its philosophical seriousness.”<sup>5</sup> This calls for an Islamic intellectual response and consolidation of Islamic foundations rather than a study of the institutional structure of Islamic knowledge claims.

Despite the preference for more sociological approaches and/or epistemological guidelines to analyze knowledge production in the discipline,<sup>6</sup> some recent efforts have focused on the agency of individual scholars as an important level of analysis, including Piki Shalom’s *Three Dialogic Imperatives in International Relations Scholarship*. Following Martin Buber’s dialogical philosophy he includes an intra-personal imperative which is internal to the scholar, a dialogue with and in herself/himself which precedes the inter-personal dialogue that helps establish the community of scholars.<sup>7</sup> Monteiro and Ruby in their piece *IR and The False Promise of Philosophical Foundations*, state that, “foundational positions have become part-and-parcel of the way IR scholars think about themselves and their work.”<sup>8</sup> According to them, what makes epistemological and ontological commitments foundational is that there are no further commitments to which one might turn to justify knowledge.<sup>9</sup> They support their realization by quoting Honderich who argues that foundational arguments posit that knowledge of the world rests on foundation of indubitable beliefs from which further propositions can be inferred to produce a superstructure of known truths.<sup>10</sup> What these realizations do is bring into light a layer of faith-based knowledge when producing/seeking knowledge about the social world, which in

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<sup>5</sup> Jurgen Habermas, “A Conversation about God and World,” 160; also see Austin Harrington, “Habermas’s Theological Turn?,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 37 (2007): 45-61.

<sup>6</sup> See Arlene Tickner & Ole Waever ‘International Relations Scholarship around the World’ (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), and Ole Waever ‘The Sociology of a not so International Discipline: American and European Developments in International Relations’ *International Organization*, vol.52, no.4 (September 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Piki Shalom ‘Three Dialog Imperatives in International Relations Scholarship’, *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, vol. 39, no. 3 (May 2011) p.825.

<sup>8</sup> Monteiro & Ruby ‘IR and Philosophical Foundations’, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> Monteiro & Ruby ‘IR and Philosophical Foundations’, p.25.

<sup>10</sup> Monteiro & Ruby ‘IR and Philosophical Foundations’, p.25.

turn puts both Muslim scholars and western IR scholars on the same level of epistemic access, one that is underlined by faith. The question then becomes not one of who bases their knowledge claims on faith, but which faith each base their work on.

Moreover, this realization calls for honesty about one's beliefs and moral consideration when approaching a theoretical exercise. "What is the nature of being?" and "what is the purpose of human existence?" are the sorts of ontological/theological/ethical questions to which particular scholars give answers that depend, in the final analysis, on a measure of faith.<sup>11</sup> This is not a call for making one's beliefs and measure of faith explicit when approaching every research problem, instead it highlights that a project of developing a theory of Islamic agency requires making the theorists' leap of faith explicit. The reason is that this pursuit necessarily sheds light on a number of questions. The most important of these is whether or not the theorist's leap of faith that is associated with his foundational commitments can hold the task of re-describing the social structures of international relations in accordance with the beliefs of the subject under study: Islamic agents. In other words, how do the answers to the above questions condition what he "sees" as a theorist, and the resultant ontological landscape where Islamic agency will be located? Is it a materialist international system? A constructivist International Society? Or a field of global social relations? To put it differently, what are the building blocks that the concept of Islamic agents will work with when operationalized, and how do the beliefs of Islamic agents interact with these ideational/material/relational building blocks? Answers to these questions indeed depend on what the theorist "sees". This takes us to a more fundamental set of questions that include: what is the aim of pursuing such a knowledge production/seeking exercise? That is, taking the scholar as an agent, what is the scholar reproducing or transforming through his

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<sup>11</sup> Patrick Jackson 'Social Science as Vocation: Weber, Pragmatism, and Experiential Inquiry' paper presented at Turin Conference 2007, page.9.

agential activity of producing knowledge about Islamic agency? Is it human moral responsibility before God as an essence of agency in the social world, including international relations? Or, on the contrary, is the secular culture of the international society of states being reproduced or transformed?

To answer these questions, the first section will introduce Islamic foundations for knowledge seeking activities, not in an abstract sense, but rather through a discussion of the belief system of the Muslim IR researcher and the implications of these beliefs for his knowledge seeking activities. These beliefs will be summarized as follows: First, the belief in *Allah* (SWT), the only and one God, the creator and sustainer of the universe. Second, that Muhammad (PBUH) is his messenger. Third, that the Quran is his word, and it is a true description of reality. And fourth, that by being a Muslim, an individual becomes morally responsible and accountable before Allah (SWT) for observing moral guidelines given to human beings (agents) in the Quran. The latter two points in particular will be emphasized in order to pinpoint the interaction and possible tension with Islamic foundations when the Muslim knowledge seeker assumes the social role of “IR researcher”.

Section two will argue against the uncritical adoption of western IR theoretical frameworks by the Muslim knowledge seeker, highlighting areas of foundational tension with both mainstream and critical IR theory through a discussion of positivist foundations that give support to the former, and social constructivism that underlies the latter. The discussion will emphasize that both foundational positions do not offer the Muslim IR researcher adequate epistemic access to the subject matter of international relations, given his Islamic foundational commitments. Accordingly, an argument will be made that a redefinition of the relationship between the scholar and the subject matter, especially agents under study, is important to highlight the relationship

between the agency of the researcher, or his understanding of his agency, and between conceptualization of real world agents in international relations, effectively making the argument that an adequate conceptualization of Islamic agency is conditioned by the agency of the Muslim IR researcher. The section will conclude with the subsequent argument that while the Muslim IR researcher should not uncritically adopt western IR theoretical frameworks, they still offer explanatory utility that could be utilized in developing a theory of Islamic agency in international relations, but only in a context of a model of Islamic knowledge-seeking that does not sacrifice Islamic foundational commitments.

Section three will propose such a model. Building on Critical Realist philosophy, especially Roy Bhaskar's work which places scientific activity in between transitive and intransitive objects of knowledge, an Islamic knowledge seeking model that involves interpretive, normative and explanatory stages will be outlined. The underlying argument will insist on the point that for the Muslim IR researcher to preserve his foundational commitments whilst taking advantage of western IR's theoretical frameworks, he cannot afford to commence his theoretical effort at the explanatory stage of knowledge production. Rather, he should start at the interpretative and normative stages since that is where his own agency as a Muslim knowledge seeker can best be expressed and subsequently the social activity of pursuing knowledge about Islamic agency in international relations can be linked to his belief systems and foundational commitments.

### ***The Muslim IR researcher as a Knowledge seeker (Taleb Elm)***

In Arabic language and Islamic literature the term "*Alem*" mirrors the term "scholar" or the one who has acquired or been granted sufficient knowledge. "*Taleb Elm*" translates as "knowledge seeker", which is a more humble description that is frequently used by Islamic scholars

especially when describing themselves and when relating their knowledge seeking activities towards knowing *Allah* (SWT). In this chapter I will use the latter, for the same reason and also to highlight the pursuit of Islamic knowledge as seeking, not producing, knowledge about the “world out there.” This will have important implications when contrasting Islamic foundations to western ones, especially those which deny an essence of the world beyond man-made descriptions.

That said, Islam has given scholars very high status. *Allah* (SWT) says in the Quran: “...*Allah will rise up, ranks those of you who believed and who have been granted knowledge*”<sup>12</sup> the prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said that “*who has followed a path of seeking knowledge, Allah (SWT) opens a path for him to heaven*”.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, while Islamic doctrine accepts and even encourages pursuit of worldly gains, as long as they do not obstruct a Muslim’s spiritual and moral development, when it comes to scholars and knowledge seekers, the pursuit of material gains is regarded, almost always, negatively. With the professionalization of knowledge and Muslims’ involvement in western disciplinary communities and academic institutions, the interaction between Muslim knowledge seekers’ reward structures which emphasize satisfaction of Allah (SWT) and the resultant moral and spiritual development, on the one hand, and the reward structures in academic world, on the other, becomes an interesting one, where the foundational commitments of the Muslim knowledge seeker and the sort of knowledge he/she is supposed to pursue necessarily battle with how they make their strategic career moves and choices. These choice and moves could result in adopting theories and orientations, that, at a deeper level, could impact upon the scholar’s answers to the sorts of

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<sup>12</sup> Quran (Chapter 58: verse 11)

<sup>13</sup> Muhammd Bin Ismail Al-BuKhari ‘Sahih Al-Bukhari, Sayings of the Prophet (PBUH)’, No.78.

ontological/theological/ethical questions mentioned above concerning “what is the nature of being?” and “what is the purpose of human existence?” etc.

A discussion of the Muslim knowledge seeker prior to embodying the social role of an “IR researcher” is important to shield his/her Islamic identity, interests and activity of seeking knowledge from being treated as a platform reproducing western ontological and epistemological foundations. Such discussion should emphasize persistence with Islamic reward structures that go beyond glamorous careers and worldly gains. The following saying by Abu-Hamid Al-Ghazali, an eleventh-century Islamic scholar, gives a flavour of knowledge seeking in Islam: “If you look at knowledge, you will find it delicious in itself, yet, it is also a means to get closer to *Allah* (SWT)”.<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere in his book *The Revival of Religious Sciences*, Al-Ghazali divides knowledge along the well-known Islamic lines of “*Fardh Ain*”, and “*Fardh Kifayah*”.<sup>15</sup> The term “*Fardh*” refers to those acts that satisfy or meet an order from *Allah* (SWT). These are classified further into two categories; “*Fardh Ain*” refers to acts that must be undertaken by every single Muslim, like the five daily prayers or fasting during the Holy Month of Ramadan; and “*Fardh Kifayah*,” which refers to orders of *Allah* (SWT) that only need to be undertaken by a number of Muslims to be satisfied. Applied to the pursuit of knowledge, this classification divides knowledge into two realms; one that must be pursued by every single Muslim, while the other by only handful of Muslims. In this light, there is a clear logical hierarchy here in the sense that one should satisfy “*Fardh Ain*” before satisfying “*Fardh Al-Kifayah*”; “*Fardh Ain*” or obligatory knowledge concerns Islamic basics like knowledge of the oneness and attributes of *Allah* (SWT), basic Islamic ethics and standards of behavior, and reward structures (heaven and hell). While knowledge that is “*Fardh Kifayah*” can encompass different fields of knowledge

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<sup>14</sup> Abu-Hamid Al-Ghazali ‘Revival of Religious Sciences’ (Cairo: Al-Afaq Al-Arabiyyah Press, reprinted 2004) p.20.

<sup>15</sup> Abu-Hamid Al-Ghazali ‘Revival of Religious Sciences’ p.23.



like mathematics or international relations. In this sense, if one declares his knowledge-seeking activity about contemporary international relations to be Islamic, he must have satisfied knowledge that is “*Fardh Ain*” including basic Islamic beliefs and ethics of conduct.

Under “*Fardh Ain*” Al-Ghazali includes what he calls “*Elm Al-Mo’amalah*” or “Knowledge of the state of the heart”.<sup>16</sup> He explains that, “this type of knowledge is concerned with the state of the heart, the good and the bad, the good concerning: being hopeful, fearful, and grateful to *Allah* (SWT), generosity, calming worldly desires, acknowledging blessings of *Allah* (SWT) in all conditions, satisfaction with the will of *Allah* (SWT), modesty, honesty, good intentions, loyalty, etc.” While the bad concerns: “hate, envy, showing off, competition, love for compliments, self-serving arguments, lack of mercy, lack of decency, etc.” For Al-Ghazali, knowledge about the truths of these states of heart, their limits, causes, signs, and ways to strengthen the good and fighting the bad is obligatory knowledge for every Muslim. Mocking some scholars at his time for failing to realize this hierarchy of knowledge he elaborates:

If you ask a scholar about these, he might not have enough knowledge about them, but if you ask him about other types of knowledge that are “*Fardh Kifayah*” he would read books...if you ask him further: ‘Why did you master this knowledge and spent nights and days pursuing it’, he would answer: ‘because it is *Fardh Kifayah* and serves the religion’, although the intelligent person can only know that if his intentions were truly serving the truth he would have prioritized knowledge that is *Fardh Ain*.<sup>17</sup>

Al-Ghazali’s schema of knowledge classification should help those who have chosen to declare their knowledge seeking activity as Islamic avoid making career choices and moves that could cloud their vision of Islamic reward structures. As mentioned above, these moves could spill over to theoretical and ontological issues tackled by the knowledge seeker. A good example from the field is the move to adopt a positivist foundation and quantitative methods in chasing

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<sup>16</sup> Abu-Hamid Al-Ghazali ‘Revival of Religious Sciences’ p.32.

<sup>17</sup> Abu-Hamid Al-Ghazali ‘Revival of Religious Sciences’ p.32.

publication in prestigious American academic journals. Such a move could be harmful to seeking Islamic-based knowledge about international relations as it gives a distorted and partial image of reality that cannot encourage the comprehension of Islamic worldviews where international relations is only one part. Knowledge of the “state of the heart” could be utilized then to understand the reward structure of the contemporary Muslim International Relations researchers and guide their theoretical orientations and career choices.

The following sayings of Imam Al-Shafa’i best exhibit the application of this knowledge by a Muslim scholar, although he lived and worked in a time when academic disciplines did not promise glamorous careers and feature disciplinary politics. “I always wished that people would benefit from this knowledge without having to take credit for it”,<sup>18</sup> and, “I never debated anyone and wished to prove him wrong...I never debated someone without a real wish that he will be supported and preserved by *Allah* (SWT)...I never debated someone and cared if the truth will come out on my tongue or his tongue”.<sup>19</sup> Even in contemporary times, it is not unusual to spot works by Muslim scholars that display this sense of moral responsibility before *Allah* (SWT). A good example is the end paragraph in the introduction to *The Islamic State and the Modern Constitutional Principles* by Ahmad Amin, who states that, “The perspectives offered are the result of personal effort, they could be proved right or wrong, if scholars agree that those perspectives are wrong, then I “take them back”, and wish that none of them be attributed to me in my life or my death...And I ask *Allah* (SWT) to make our work for his sake, and guide and bless us.” Remember that this is not part of an introduction to a book on theology, but one on constitutional principles.

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<sup>18</sup> Abu-Hamid Al-Ghazali ‘Revival of Religious Sciences’ p.39.

<sup>19</sup> Abu-Hamid Al-Ghazali ‘Revival of Religious Sciences’ p.39.

“Knowledge of the state of the heart” or “*Elm Al Mo’amalah*” as obligatory knowledge offers Muslim International Relations scholars solid ethical ground for their activity as knowledge seekers, but such knowledge only indirectly implies an Islamic foundational position. For this, we need to turn to basic Islamic beliefs and worldviews. These basic beliefs can be described in the following terms: First, the belief in *Allah* (SWT), the only and one God, the creator and sustainer of the universe. Second, that Muhammad (PBUH) is his messenger. Third, that the Quran is his word, and it provides the true description of reality. And fourth, that by being a Muslim, an individual becomes morally responsible and accountable before *Allah* (SWT) for observing moral guidelines given to human beings in the Quran. These beliefs are presented as foundational in the sense of being the Islamic version of what Monteiro and Ruby describe as “indubitable beliefs from which further propositions can be inferred to produce a superstructure of known truths” and further that “there are no further commitments to which one might turn to justify knowledge”. In this light, these beliefs are the epistemological and ontological refuge for the Muslim IR researcher. It is at this level that the question, “What must the world be like in order for a theory of Islamic agency to be possible?” is answered. In other words, it is at this level where rejection or acceptance of a materialist international system, rational choice theory, or state personification takes place. It is reflection at this level that keeps the Muslim IR researcher from “rushing” to choose between different agent-structure solutions, and instead he/she must reflect on the nature and properties of agents and structures according to his/her Islamic foundational commitments.

*I am a creationist:*

The first and second Islamic basic beliefs are not exactly the type of foundational commitments that are in play when a Muslim IR researcher is involved in a theoretical exercise. Rather, it is

the derivative third and fourth commitments that directly underlie such activity, namely, a belief in the Quran as the true description of “reality out there” and the moral responsibility and accountability of human agents, including the Muslim IR researcher himself, before *Allah* (SWT) for observing moral guidelines given in the Quran and exemplified through the life and sayings of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Islamic sources of knowledge do not claim to be true descriptions of only the natural or material world, but also of the social world. Moreover, Islamic sources are not only involved in describing social phenomena, but also asserting that human actions have essential values in themselves, and subsequently offering a moral assessment of those actions, to prohibit, allow, encourage or discourage those actions. To be sure, Islamic resources (Quran and Sunnah) alternate between giving general moral guidelines for social action in some cases, and more direct value assessment and rulings on other cases. This has opened the door for a debate among Muslim scholars that centres around the following questions: Firstly whether human actions have values and essence in themselves that make them good or bad as a creation of God described by revelation; or whether they are given meaning and associated values through social interaction? Secondly, who can legitimately assess these values; revelation or the human mind? And thirdly, who can legitimately allow or prohibit those actions?<sup>20</sup>

There have been disputes among Muslims in answering these questions; yet, none is too radical to resist the moral authority of revelation in assessing the values of human action.<sup>21</sup> If anything, radical views have tended to move in the direction of taking away the capacity of moral assessment from human agents. The roots of these disputes go back to the first generation of

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<sup>20</sup> AbdelMajeed Al-Najjar ‘*Khilafat Al-Ensan Ban Alwahy Wal-Aql*’ [Vice-regency of Humanity: Between Revelation and the Mind ] (Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2005) p.78.

<sup>21</sup> Alnajjar ‘*Khilafat Al-Ensan*’ p.78

Muslim intellectuals and companions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) after his death. These disputes were mirrored in two intellectual schools: the school of *Hadith*, that strictly follows texts of both Quran and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) regardless of context of time and space, and the school of *Ra'i*, or (opinion) which gives human action and assessment greater role in applying rules derived from Quran and *Sunnah*.<sup>22</sup> This however, did not halt the development of mainstream<sup>23</sup> Islamic position on these questions. According to AbdulMajeed Al-Najjar, who provides a thorough discussion of the issue in his book “*Khilafat Al-Ensan: Bayn Alwahy wal-Aql*” (Vice-regency of Humanity: Between Revelation and the Mind), the mainstream Islamic position can be summarized as follows: First, human actions have moral essence in themselves, since denial of this essence can place the action of worshipping *Allah* (SWT), and the action of worshipping others, on the same moral level, and such equality is unacceptable according to revelation and application of revelation by the human mind. Second, revelation is the main source of knowledge, description, and moral assessment of human actions. Third, whenever revelation does not offer guidance and assessment of the moral value of specific human actions, human beings are required to utilize their capacity to assess such actions and, subsequently, encourage or prohibit them. This cannot occur independently of revelation. Moral assessment and ruling must be derived from its general moral guidance since *Allah* (SWT) created the mind, and made it capable of discovering and assessing the moral value of human action, otherwise moral responsibility of human agents before him would be redundant. Yet this

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<sup>22</sup> Sha’ban Ismail “Usul Alfeqh Almuyassar” [Principles of Fiqh] (Beirut: Ibn-Hazm Press, 2008) p. 34.

<sup>23</sup> Mainstream position here means the wide acceptance by the Majority of Muslim Scholars on a given issue. In Arabic language and Islamic literature it mirrors ‘Ijma’ which is one of the main sources of knowledge in Islamic fiqh.

capacity is limited by the context of space and time, and is not sufficient without guidance by revelation.<sup>24</sup>

Given this position, and given the resurgence of normative theorizing in western IR theory, the Muslim knowledge seeker who embodies the social role of IR researcher, automatically finds himself in an intersection that makes clarifying his foundational commitments essential before embarking on a theoretical exercise that involves both Islamic and western knowledge structures, not in the impersonal sense, however, of “hiding” behind epistemological and methodological guidelines, but in the more agential sense of linking those foundational commitments to his belief system. To their credit, western IR theorists have lately become more comfortable in making those links clearer. For example, in his conclusion to a piece on sociological approaches to the study of International Relations in the Oxford Handbook, Friedrich Kratochwill insists that, “all we have are constructs rather than things, as they are”.<sup>25</sup> This is an argument he derives from his own foundational commitments, which he makes clear, in a rather provocative statement that “There are no ultimate givens such as essences or even (indivisible) atoms or genera and species, unless you are a creationist”.<sup>26</sup>

Well, I am a creationist, and I believe that it is *"Our Lord Who gave to each (created) thing its form and nature, and further, gave (it) guidance."* (Quran: 20:50). Which means that I believe, given the Islamic position highlighted by Al-Najjar above, that actions have moral essence and “attributions” given by Allah (SWT) prior to any man-made constitution, or inter-subjectively agreed upon characterization of such action. As mentioned above, Islamic sources alternate between offering general moral guidelines from which a moral assessment can be derived, and

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<sup>24</sup> Alnajjar ‘Khilafat Al-Ensan’ p.78

<sup>25</sup> Fredrich Kratochwill ‘Sociological Approaches in International Relations’, in Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal Oxford Hand Book of International Relations’, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008) p.458

<sup>26</sup> Kratochwill, ‘Sociological Approaches’ p.458

giving specific moral values and assessments of specific situations. An example for the former could be presented through an assessment of a specific case for humanitarian intervention, where there might not be a clear Islamic moral assessment of the issue. The Muslim IR researcher could still, however, derive a more specific moral assessment from general Islamic moral guidelines and, in this case, insights from man-made assessments and characterizations of the action of humanitarian intervention in contemporary international relations can be helpful. An example for the latter case could be the development, proliferation and use of nuclear weapons, or the capitalist invention of investing in derivatives, or, from outside International Relations, a son “disrespecting” a parent or a parent “abusing” a son. Here there is clear Islamic moral assessment that no amount of inter-subjective understandings or layers of man-made attributions and moral assessment can make these practices right. Intersubjectivity cannot make them something that they are not.

Given this normatively loaded context of knowledge pursuit, the only assurance for a theoretical exercise to remain Islamic is agential commitment to Islamic foundations. In other words, one could wonder if a theory of agency in international relations can be Islamic, if the theorist undertaking such a project does not believe that Islamic sources of knowledge give a true description and moral assessment of the social world. Equally important is whether such a theory of agency is possible if the theorist does not believe that he/she is morally responsible before *Allah* (SWT) for the activity of producing a theory of Islamic agency in international relations. In this light, if the theorist loses his/her commitment to Islamic foundations so too does the conceptualization of agency under study. A logical question then follows: How can the Muslim IR researcher as a knowledge seeker (*Taleb Elm*) utilize western IR theory to navigate the complexity of contemporary international relations, without losing or conceding his Islamic

foundations? Or in terms more relevant to this project, how can a Muslim IR researcher develop a theory of agency in international relations that is based on Islamic foundations while using explanatory and conceptual tools from IR theory?

Again, this calls for exploration of the early stages of a theoretical exercise undertaken by an IR researcher committed to Islamic foundations; specifically, the stage of epistemic access which brings us closer to a central point of this discussion, which is in what ways Islamic foundational commitments condition how the researcher approaches the subject matter. Of course different social scientific foundations offer different “rules” on how the researcher approaches the phenomena under study. Taking a critical realist entry point can better illuminate how the Islamic foundational commitments can be linked to the subject matter. At this entry point, however, one should take account of the critical realist ontological principle that insists on the concept dependent nature of social structures, that is, unlike natural structures they do not exist independently of the agents’ conceptions of what they are doing.<sup>27</sup> At first sight this could be viewed as counter-productive as it might suggest that the descriptions and moral guidelines of the Muslim researcher are irrelevant to the conceptions of agents embedded within those structures. Colin Wight provides a way out of this potentially double hermeneutic cycle by suggesting that because agents must have some concepts of what they are doing, it does not mean that they will always have the right concept and that some concepts held by agents may actually mask, repress, mystify, obscure, or otherwise occlude the nature of the activity concerned.<sup>28</sup> That said, Wight insists that it is important while discussing the issue that one does

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<sup>27</sup> Colin Wight, *Agents, Structures, and International Relations: Politics as Ontology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p. 53

<sup>28</sup> Wight ‘Politics as Ontology’ p.57



not omit the centrality of agents' ideas and concepts.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, in some respects, the concept-dependent nature of the social sciences affords a point of entry for social scientific inquiry not available to the natural sciences. For a social scientist, most of the interesting phenomena will already be identified under certain descriptions as being a result of the concept-dependent nature of the social world. Accordingly, the starting point for any investigation of social phenomena must be the concepts of the agents concerned.<sup>30</sup> This seems like a convenient entry point for the Muslim IR researcher into the subject matter; on the one hand, it takes seriously the ideas and meanings of agents concerned; and on the other hand, it opens up the possibility of “correcting” those concepts by re-describing social structures where agents are embedded according to Islamic descriptions and offering moral assessment accordingly, satisfying their sense of moral responsibility before *Allah* (SWT) as Muslim knowledge seekers.

Re-describing the concepts of the agents concerned will also necessarily involve making prior ontological decisions not only on the properties and nature of agency, like human versus corporate, reflective versus rational, etc. but also on social structures. This does not violate the principle that the concepts of agents should be the starting point when the Muslim IR researcher approach a social phenomena. Rather, it highlights that approaching any social context should be conditioned on Islamic ontological principles reflecting a commitment to Islamic descriptions of reality. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the Muslim IR researcher would have to decide on the ontological landscape where Islamic agency will be located. Is it a materialist international system? A constructivism based International Society? Or a field of global social relations? In this light, can the Muslim IR researcher, as knowledge seeker (*Taleb Elm*), be a neo-realist, neo-Liberal, English School Theorist, or a constructivist, whilst keeping his Islamic

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<sup>29</sup> Wight ‘ Politics as Ontology’ p.56

<sup>30</sup> Wight ‘ Politics as Ontology’ p.57

foundational commitments? This question cannot be answered without a brief assessment of the main foundational positions underlying western IR theory and the epistemic access they grant. It remains a fact, however, that critical realism is a minor position on a foundational spectrum that underlies western IR theory where one end is occupied by positivism and the other by social constructivism.<sup>31</sup> The next section looks at the major assumptions of each and how they impact on the use of western IR theory by the Muslim researcher.

### ***Islamic Foundational Commitments and Philosophical Foundations of IR:***

#### *Muslim...And Positivist?*

The positivist principles of producing social scientific knowledge can be summarized as follows: First, adherence to empirical epistemology. Second, and subsequently, ontological tolerance to instrumentalist treatment of theoretical terms, in the sense that theoretical terms do not refer to real entities, but such entities are to be understood “as if” they existed in order to explain the empirical phenomena. Third, a belief in regularities. Fourth, a belief in value/fact distinction. Finally, a belief in the unity of science thesis.<sup>32</sup>

It is clear from these assumptions that the epistemic access of the Muslim knowledge seeker, or the conditions under which he gains knowledge, cannot stand for long before being classified as “pseudo-science”, even if a tolerant application of empirical epistemology allowed talk of an “unobservable” God. The sense of moral responsibility before Him cannot pass the fact/value distinction. Interestingly enough, however, Monterio and Ruby take issue with the notion of “observability” as positivism’s leap of faith, since, according to them, “...there is (using instrumentalist logic) no scientific basis for judging something as observable. Observability must

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<sup>31</sup> Monteiro & Ruby ‘IR and Philosophical Foundations’.

<sup>32</sup> Wight, ‘ Politics as Ontology’ p.21

be defined a priori, in a pre-scientific way, a leap of faith is thus required when, as instrumentalists do, the observable/unobservable distinction is used to anchor both a theory of truth (empirical adequacy) and the goal of science (utility reliability).”<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the combination of empirical epistemology and instrumental treatment of theoretical entities does not stop at reducing knowledge seeking activities to the level of what can be observed or experienced. If we accept that observation is an intelligent activity of bringing concepts to bear,<sup>34</sup> then in reality it does offer, depending on the subject matter, a certain way of organizing and ordering our experience by assuming that the postulated theoretical entities and their relationships are as suggested in theory. In Wight’s words:

This instrumental treatment is clear in positivists’ approach to structure. Positivists are happy to use the term structure but only instrumentally: it is ‘as if’ structure existed...since the status of claims regarding structure in these accounts is not ontological, there is little need for them to make clear how they use the term. As long as the postulated term helps explain/predict the phenomena there is no need to examine it further.<sup>35</sup>

Empirical epistemology and instrumentalism then shield what James Rosenau calls ‘pre-theory’ or the conceptual apparatus that give significance to facts that never speak for themselves;<sup>36</sup> they tell us what to look at and what to look for, thus they organize and order our experience when observing international relations. Equally importantly they tell us what to ignore; human agency, belief systems, normative structure, simply all the bits and pieces that the Muslim IR researcher needs to link his Islamic knowledge to the realm of international relations.

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<sup>33</sup> Monteiro and Ruby, ‘IR and Philosophical Foundations’ p.33

<sup>34</sup> Martin Hollis & Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) p.52

<sup>35</sup> Wight, ‘Politics as Ontology’, p. 122

<sup>36</sup> James Rosenau, ‘Pre-Theories and Theories of Foreign Policy’, in R.B. Farrell, ‘Approaches to Comparative and International Politics’ (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1966), pp. 27-92

This does not suggest, however, that a Muslim IR researcher should not use positivist methods like statistics,<sup>37</sup> for example, for the fulfillment of specific tasks in research. Yet, the use of these methods should not spill over to ontological treatment of entities and allow the positivist roots of these methods to order and organize the researcher's experience. This can be achieved by stating clearly the context of utilizing these methods and how they fit within the Islamic foundations of the research. In this context, positivist methods cannot dictate the findings of a given research as what they offer is not the end result that a Muslim researcher would be looking for. Instead they should come wrapped in an Islamic hypothesis and findings. For example, an Islamic based hypothesis about the "engagement of Muslim agents in international organizations" might be served by positivist methods in a given stage of research such as "voting systems and participation". In order to situate this stage in a wider research underlined by Islamic foundations, however, a re-conceptualization, re-categorization of concepts and even the generation of new data sets might be needed.

By extension, a Muslim IR researcher can temporarily be a neo-realist and a neoliberal? For example, when the research focus is on the relationship between two Muslim states it will be difficult to sustain a purely neo-realist or neoliberal frameworks, both of which are based on rational calculations and limited space to reflect normative considerations and principles of relationships among Muslims or Muslim entities as prescribed by many Islamic moral guidelines. Alternatively, when the research concerns a Muslim state and, say, Canada, then a neoliberal approach might be used. The study of engagement with, say, Russia might best be approached through a neo-realist framework. Of course this brings to mind a number of

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<sup>37</sup> Statistics is assumed here to be a positivist method, although it could be used in different frameworks that loosen the links with the positivist foundations. For a discussion in this issue see Jonathan Moses and Tobjorn Knusten, *Ways of Knowing: Competing Methodologies in Social and Political Research*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan: 2012).

questions concerning research focus on structural dimensions such as material, intersubjective, and relational, on the one hand, and bracketing of the state's range of engagement behaviour, interest, and identity on the other hand. These questions will be further explored in the coming chapters, for now, the point to make is that temporality and pragmatism might justify a careful use of positivist methods and the IR frameworks that they underlie.

That said, my own intuitions lie with the belief that both frameworks, because of the foundational commitments that underlie them, cannot hold the comprehensiveness of Islamic views on the social world at least as claimed in this thesis. Instead what is needed is an extension of Islamic knowledge to International Relations, to have Islamic “pre-theory” to organize and order the experience of Muslim IR researchers when observing international relations, to tell us what to look at, what to look for and what to ignore. With this in mind, the Muslim IR observer should not observe only partial material/positivist laws, like for example, “balance of power”. The Islamic observer should also ask the following: “balance of power between whom? What are the moral justifications for each? Who holds the moral authority to define the conflict?”

Furthermore, working solely with materialist structure, rational actors and the security dilemma might cloud the vision of the Muslim IR researcher from the Islamic view of the totality of the social world. As Friedrich Nietzsche says, “whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster”.<sup>38</sup> To put it in IR theory terms, “when the Muslim IR researcher uses neo-realist or neo-liberal tools, he should see to it that in the process he does not become an observer of the behaviour of rational actors calculating purely material gains under anarchy”.

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<sup>38</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, ‘Beyond good and Evil’, Aphorism 146.

### *Muslim...and Social Constructivist?*

Although the implications for adopting social constructivism as a set of foundational commitments were briefly visited through a discussion of Kratochwil's arguments above, a deeper reflection on such foundations, or lack of, is needed to assess the possible role they could play in mediating between Islamic foundational commitments and IR theories/frameworks. It could be argued that the most important principle of social constructivism is the belief that all knowledge is socially constructed.<sup>39</sup> This principle in turn is based on the realization that language, meanings and ideas mediate all human experience including knowledge production. Thus, social constructivism does not only deny the possibility of objective knowledge about the world, but more radical versions would also deny the existence of a world beyond the meanings that "our" language, description and concepts give "life" to. Accordingly, social constructivists claim that they are not themselves in search of truth. Rather, their purpose is to unmask how claims that other positions find true - and thus take for granted - are in fact the results of socially produced consensus. Subsequently, social constructivists believe that the best they can do is interpretation and critique.

In this light, social constructivism could be helpful or damaging to Islamic foundational commitments depending on the stage of knowledge seeking effort and maturity of an Islamic discipline of international relations. Taking in mind Alwani's recommendations, mentioned in chapter one, that Islamization of knowledge of international relations should extend ties with more critical approaches in western International Relations, one cannot ignore the benefits of social constructivist tools when engaging in a critique of knowledge production in mainstream

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<sup>39</sup> See for example Nickolas Onuf, 'World of our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations' (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989) ,and Friedrich Kratochwil, 'Rules, Norms, and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs' (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989)

western IR theory, which claims universality and generality. This makes such critique a necessary initial stage in developing an Islamic approach to International Relations. But this is where Islamic efforts and social constructivism diverge; since Muslim IR researchers, given their Islamic foundational commitments, will have to go their way seeking “truth” while social constructivists will keep doing what they do best, interpretation and critique. Otherwise, if the Muslim IR researcher continues the social constructivist path, then the inevitable result is to doubt his/her own Islamic foundational commitments as themselves socially produced and not divine descriptions and guidelines about a world beyond man-made knowledge.

This leads us to the leap of faith required by social constructivism, which is, “a faith in that, despite the social nature of knowledge, claims about the social construction of knowledge are themselves not socially constructed”.<sup>40</sup> Again, given the responsibility of the Muslim IR researcher to adopt moral guidelines when epistemologically accessing a social structure that is defined by shared moral assessment, it becomes clear that what is needed is more than just interpretations and critique, but also a follow through in the form of proposing different value-systems. Such an effort, however, requires clear moral criteria and a stable ontological landscape, both of which cannot be provided by social constructivist foundations. In other words, at first instance, social constructivism does seem to offer a convenient point of entry to the subject matter for the Muslim IR researcher through its emphasis on interpretation and critique, but it is not too long before the researcher finds himself in a never-ending cycle of interpretation where the anticipated following stage of re-describing social structure according to Islamic knowledge never comes.

In terms of epistemic access, which allows the Muslim researcher to bring in Islamic descriptions of the social world, moral guidelines and a sense of moral responsibility before *Allah* (SWT),

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<sup>40</sup> Monteiro & Ruby, ‘IR and Philosophical Foundations’ p. 33

both positivism and social constructivism do not seem to offer such a balanced entry point. And thus Muslim IR researchers should be cautious when adopting theoretical frameworks that are supported by these foundational positions. On the one hand, social constructivism takes the interpretative “moment” to the extreme by placing too much emphasis on the centrality of the concept-dependent nature of social structures and by extension the ideas and concepts of agents concerned, which leaves very little room for the Muslim researcher to describe these structures in terms of the “unacknowledged” aspects of their reality. On the other hand, positivism, at first sight, seems to offer an unmediated access to reality, yet a closer look reveals that this access is not only mediated but also directed and ordered according to instrumentalist theoretical entities and useful theoretical fictions. In a way, what it offers is not an access that passes through the concepts of the agents concerned but the concepts of western IR theorists that created and sustained these “useful fictions”.

The implications of epistemological and ontological barriers of western IR theory to non-western, specifically Muslim, researchers are carried over to essential theoretical practice and activities like conceptualization, abstraction, bracketing, etc. The above discussion can demonstrate that there is a relationship between the foundational commitments of the researcher and the conceptualization of agency, the conceptualization of structures and the relationship between them. This suggests a claim that the agent-structure problem focuses, in more general terms, on the question of how creativity and constraints are related through social activity and how we can explain this co-existence, and that it subsequently involves a set of deep political<sup>41</sup> and normative questions. From here, it could be concluded that the technical role of scholars in conceptualization, abstraction, bracketing and allocating properties and powers of subjects under study, most clearly agents and structures, is underlined by normative positions on different issues

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<sup>41</sup> Wight, ‘Politics as Ontology’ p. 291



including the scholar's stand on the possibility, and even desirability, of change in the current structural configuration, trust or lack of intelligibility and morality of human action, and the need for applicability and extension of general moral guidelines that transcend the specificities of social arrangements including international relations. There is, then, normative implications that are hard to disassociate from explanatory efforts of the scholar, that are usually overlooked in mainstream western IR theory. In other words, every proposed solution to the agent-structure problem is conditioned by the normative position of the scholar on the issues mentioned above. Such normative positions not only condition the formulation of the relationship between agency and structure, but also allocate properties, capacities, and powers to each. Should conceptualization of agency be "armed" with reflexivity, moral purpose and ethical reasoning? Answers to this question depend on foundational commitments that underlie the chosen theoretical frameworks. The theoretical exercise of developing a conceptualization of Islamic agency needs certain ontological principles and normative positions that can only be offered through Islamic foundational commitments, not through positivist or social constructivist foundational commitments. A theory of Islamic agency needs the agency of the Muslim IR researcher to include his Islamic normative positions and ontological principles on the nature and properties of agency in the social world.

*Scholars, agents and structures: the Mutual Learning of "condemning ethnic cleansing"*

As mentioned at the end of the last section, the normative moment preceding more technical aspects of theorizing is usually overlooked in the literature on knowledge production in international relations. This in turn has resulted in the "taken for grantedness" of not only assumptions of theoretical frameworks in western IR theory but also the limits placed on agential capacities and actions therein. In a way, what this involves is the realization that when the

scholar chooses or proposes to allocate a set of properties and capacities to agency he is also choosing or proposing a position for his own agency in relation to real world agents: He could choose the role of observer, reporter and interpreter of the ideas of agents under study, and save himself from the trouble of re-describing social structures according to the unacknowledged conditions of production, let alone offering moral assessment, since he believes that there is no reality independent of the concepts of agents concerned. Alternatively, he can grant himself the power of building a “world” that places agency within ready-made social arrangements regardless of the concepts and ideas of the agents concerned, temporarily bracketing, or even eternally abstracting, those agential capacities that might complicate his framework and thus keep the building blocks reproduced “over the heads of agents”.

Two examples from English School theorists, arguably the theoretical body least concerned about foundational issues, can demonstrate how foundational issues can impact on the conceptualization and treatment of agents under study. In a piece titled *International Relations as a Craft Discipline*,<sup>42</sup> Robert Jackson’s work demonstrates an example of under-estimating the role and knowledge of IR scholars and researchers in relation to real world agents. In terms of epistemic access to the subject matter, he takes the concept-dependent nature of social structures to the extreme and downgrades the agency of scholars to those of reporters of the experience of statesmen. He explicitly states that the role and academic responsibility of the political scientist ends when he achieves a plausible and coherent interpretation of the political practitioner’s world: to construe that world in applicable academic terms in one’s teaching and writing.<sup>43</sup> Stating the issue as one of “academic responsibility” allows him to comfortably refrain from exploring the possibility of knowledge production moving in the other direction, that is, to re-

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<sup>42</sup> Robert Jackson, ‘International Relations as a Craft Discipline’, in Cornelia Navari ‘Theorizing International Society: English School Methods’ (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

<sup>43</sup> Jackson, ‘International Relations as a Craft Discipline’, p.26

describe the political practitioner's world according to the unacknowledged conditions of production that are independent of the concept of political practitioner. For him, even if epistemologically permitted, this is still undesirable "activism" that falls outside academic responsibility. Moreover, and subsequently, Jackson insists that international ethics is not external to world politics: it is not something brought in from outside,<sup>44</sup> but just like ethics in any other sphere of human activity, international ethics develop within the activity itself. Accordingly, scholars must assess the conduct of statespeople by the standards that are generally accepted by those same statespeople.<sup>45</sup> To solidify his argument that moral assessment is, above all, a function of statespeople, he offers a set of questions as examples, the most striking of which is his question that, "Must ethnic cleansing be always condemned?"<sup>46</sup> If statespeople cannot make such a moral assessment, then surely they need outside help.

Jackson's approach clearly does not offer a suitable space for the agency and role of the Muslim IR researcher as defined above. Had he stated the issue as one of "moral responsibility" instead of "academic responsibility" more venues would have been opened for the Muslim IR researcher to take advantage of the limited knowledge of statesmen of the totality of their context to re-describe their world according to Islamic sources, and offer a moral assessment accordingly, yet without downplaying the concept-dependent nature of social structures. Conceptually and physically speaking, ethnic cleansings takes place "outside" the political practitioner's world, that is, outside the international system; it takes place in forests in Uganda and villages in Kosovo. There does not seem to be a good reason why moral assessment condemning such activities should come solely from the culture of the international system and moral standards that are only acceptable to statespeople.

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<sup>44</sup> Jackson, 'International Relations as a Craft Discipline', p.29

<sup>45</sup> Jackson, 'International Relations as a Craft Discipline', p.30

<sup>46</sup> Jackson, 'International Relations as a Craft Discipline', p.27

The second example which highlights an imbalanced relationship between the knowledge and moral assessment of the scholar and those of the agents under study comes from Buzan's major work, *From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalization*. This has already been discussed in the first chapter, although at this point revisiting his work should shed light on what could be seen as a mirror position of Jackson's, where he places agents in a ready-made world and even limits their capacities and properties in order to maintain coherence and order within his framework. From the very beginning, Buzan distances his work from other English School efforts, which he describes as interpretative or normative.<sup>47</sup> Buzan classifies English School Theory into three strands, first an interpretative strand: "as a set of ideas to be found in the minds of statesmen"; second, a normative strand, "as a set of ideas to be found in the minds of political theorists"; and third, a structural strand, "as a set of externally imposed concepts that define the material and social structures of the international system".<sup>48</sup> Buzan claims that his work belongs to the third strand, and to further separate his work from the other two strands, he describes his theory as a "theory about norms not normative theory".<sup>49</sup> More boldly for an English School theorist, he insists that his theory is based on positivist foundations.<sup>50</sup>

Buzan's classification is indeed helpful in explaining the relationships through which the argument that a conceptualization of Islamic agency needs the agency of the Muslim Scholar can be further solidified. This, however, can only be achieved by arguing first that the interpretative, normative, and structural/explanatory stands are not exactly strands, but stages or moments that every theoretical effort passes through, or, at least, decides to acknowledge or not. The

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<sup>47</sup> Barry Buzan, 'From International to World Society? English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalization' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p.12.

<sup>48</sup> Buzan, 'From International to World Society?' p.12.

<sup>49</sup> Buzan, 'From International to World Society?' p.14.

<sup>50</sup> Buzan, 'From International to World Society?' p.14.

importance of highlighting interpretation and taking normative positions as stages of every theoretical effort, not opposing strands, lies in the fact that it is at the interpretative and normative moments that the foundational commitments of the Muslim IR researcher make their presence felt before utilizing explanatory/structural tools and frameworks of western IR theory. Buzan's formulation of the structural/explanatory strand, as a "set of externally imposed concepts that define the material and social structures of the international system" is a good starting point to make this argument. The key term in this formulation is "define". This does not seem to take account of the distance between the knowledge and conceptualization of the scholar and between the real material and social structures "out there" that are independent on our knowledge of them. A better term that can capture this distance is "describe" rather than "define". To be sure, elsewhere in his book Buzan refers to those concepts as analytical constructs that describe and help theorize about what goes on in the real world.<sup>51</sup> If this is the case, then it is not clear why those concepts are referred to as "externally imposed" on agents. Above all, although they describe what goes on in the real world, they are still a "set of ideas in the minds of scholars". These scholars are not political theorists, as in Buzan's normative strand, but IR theorists, who are more driven by describing the real world, than with the core questions of political theory, such as "How do we lead the good life?" and "how is progress possible in international society?".<sup>52</sup> That the concerns of IR theorists are thought to be only analytical while those of political theorists are normative does not change the fact that those analytical constructs are still "ideas to be found in the minds of IR theorists". It is through these ideas, then, that IR theorists construct the "world" where conceptualization of agency is to be placed, and make the necessary abstraction and bracketing in order to ensure that the conceptualization of agency does

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<sup>51</sup> Buzan, 'From International to World Society?' p.14.

<sup>52</sup> Buzan, 'From International to World Society?' p.14.

not upset the harmony of this “world”. This does not place Buzan’s work or any other work that claims to be explanatory/structural in the normative strand. Rather, the point to make is that any explanatory effort builds on interpretative and normative decisions, and that those decisions do feature in the “world” where agency is to be placed. It is only fair that it is the Muslim IR researcher who should construct the world where a conceptualization of Islamic agency is to be placed. In other words, and to use Buzan’s formulation; a conceptualization of agency needs the “ideas in the mind of the Muslim IR researcher” to be Islamic. This, however, cannot take place without the theoretical effort of the Muslim IR researcher passing through the interpretative and normative moments where his foundational commitments can be expressed prior to problematizing the analytical constructs of the explanatory/structural stage, including the limitations forced on conceptualization of agency in western IR theory, such as a lack of reflexivity or moral responsibility, which might not help in expressing Islamic agency.

Taken as one project, western IR theory, although institutionalized, as the basis of an academic discipline that is taught in universities in Cairo, Kuwait and Doha, etc. is still “ideas in the minds of western IR theorists” that do not define, but only give a culturally distinct set of descriptions to the material and social structures of international relations that in turn limit the conceptualization space of agency. The adoption of its “facts” and theories, paradigms and models, methods and techniques of inquiry by a Muslim IR researcher committed to Islamic foundations suggests an intelligible activity of seeking knowledge that, while able to take advantage of the explanatory power of western IR theory, does not have to sacrifice Islamic foundational commitments in the process. The next section proposes a model for this task.

### *The “Intelligibility” of Developing a Theory of Islamic Agency in International Relations*

What we have now is an IR researcher with an Islamic belief system working in the western discipline of International Relations and seeking theoretical knowledge about Islamic agents in international relations. The discussion in this chapter demonstrated that there is indeed a tension between Islamic foundational commitments and those underlying western IR theory, one that suggests that the uncritical adoption of western IR theoretical frameworks may result in distorted or partial images that do not fit the wider Islamic ontology and agential placement within that ontology. This section proposes a knowledge-seeking model that can preserve Islamic foundations while borrowing IR theoretical tools to develop Islamic perspectives on international relations including a theory of Islamic agency. To put it differently, the aim is to allow the Muslim IR researcher to extend Islamic knowledge about the social world, human nature, and universal laws to the realm of international relations where western IR theoretical toolkit can serve as an aid instead of a barrier to such theoretical effort.

Fortunately, Critical Realist philosophy can be applied to give coherence and intellectual stability to this model. Specifically, Bhaskar’s work on the intelligibility of scientific activity and the resultant classification of objects of knowledge into transitive and intransitive can be shown to fit the task. For Bhaskar, in order for scientific activity to be intelligible, one must assume that knowledge is of two types, transitive and intransitive. The necessary existence of an intransitive dimension of knowledge is in particular what makes scientific activity an intelligible one, or even possible. Intransitive objects of knowledge are unknown to us and we wish to have knowledge of them. They are the real things, structures, mechanisms and processes, events and possibilities of the world; and for the most part they are independent of us.<sup>53</sup> They, however,

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<sup>53</sup> Roy Bahskar, ‘A Realist Theory of Science’ (London, Verso, 1975) p. 22

come together to produce events that we perceive empirically.<sup>54</sup> Transitive objects of knowledge, conversely, are antecedently established facts and theories, paradigms and models, methods and techniques of inquiry available to a particular scientific school or worker.<sup>55</sup> They are used to generate knowledge about the intransitive objects of knowledge (structures, mechanisms, processes, etc.). Given the logical expectation of the intelligibility of science, perception and experimental activity, our knowledge in the form of theories, models, and analytical constructs must be independent of the intransitive objects of knowledge. Moreover, this intransitive dimension of knowledge that we wish to generate knowledge about must also feature depth and stratification. It is this depth, stratification, and independence from our knowledge as “scientific workers” that keeps the scientist interested, puzzled and engaged, and keeps scientific activity going as an intelligible activity. From this perspective, a belief in an independent, deep, and stratified ontology becomes a condition of production for scientific activity. According to Bhaskar then, this gives an answer to the question “What must the world be like for science to be possible?”<sup>56</sup> That is, for science to be possible as an intelligible practice the world must feature independence, depth and stratification. For him, this answer deserves the name of “ontology”, specifically, philosophical ontology<sup>57</sup>.

Indeed, this brings some comfort to the Muslim IR researcher knowing that the nature and properties of agency, and the material and social structures of international relations where they operate are intransitive objects of knowledge that are independent from the transitive objects of knowledge or theories and models of western IR theory. To contrast this formulation to that of Buzan’s, this comfort comes from realizing that “ideas in the minds of western IR theorists” are

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<sup>54</sup> Roy Bahskar, ‘A Realist Theory of Science’ (London, Verso, 1975) p. 22

<sup>55</sup> Roy Bahskar, ‘A Realist Theory of Science’ (London, Verso, 1975) p. 21

<sup>56</sup> Roy Bahskar, ‘A Realist Theory of Science’ (London, Verso, 1975) p. 29.

<sup>57</sup> Roy Bahskar, ‘A Realist Theory of Science’ (London, Verso, 1975) p. 23.



not externally imposed concepts that define the material and social structures of international relations but only a set of transitive objects of knowledge that offer one possible description of an independent, stratified and deep reality.

Yet, for more confident Islamic knowledge-pursuit activity, one can build on Bhaskar's question and ask the following: "What must the world be like for Islamic knowledge-seeking activity to be possible?" That is, what are the foundational beliefs that keep the Muslim knowledge seeker pursuing knowledge? The answer takes us to the four principles in the first section: First, the belief in *Allah* (SWT), the only and one God, the creator and sustainer of the universe. Second, That Muhammad (PBUH) is his messenger. Third, that the Quran is his word, and it does give the *true* description of "reality out there". And fourth, that by being a Muslim, an individual becomes morally responsible and accountable before *Allah* (SWT) for observing moral guidelines given to human beings (agents) in the Quran. This is the Islamic answer that gives Islamic knowledge seeking activities its intelligibility. This answer is neither a transitive nor an intransitive object of knowledge. Rather, it is the foundational belief that relates the two through the knowledge-seeking activity of the Muslim IR researcher who must adhere to such foundational beliefs in order to "go on", or to move more confidently between his prayer rug and his desk. Following Bhaskar's categorization, this is the Islamic answer to the question "What must the world be like for Islamic knowledge-seeking activity to be possible?" Accordingly they play the same role "philosophical ontology" play for scientific knowledge production, they give intelligibility to the pursuit of Islamic knowledge.<sup>58</sup>

To be sure, Bhaskar does not include this deeper level of knowledge, which he called

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<sup>58</sup> Since Islam is essentially a belief system, the issue of "putting epistemology before ontology" which is not in line with Critical Realism might be of concern. Solving this issue, however, needs an understanding of belief systems in general and Islamic in particular as inclusive of ontological principles as argued so far in this chapter. It is these ontological principles that serve as descriptions of reality. The belief in which, however, is based on faith.

“philosophical ontology,” in transitive nor intransitive types of knowledge, since it does not fit in any of the two categories. On the one hand, foundational knowledge or philosophical ontology are not theories and models that *might* guide the scientist to intransitive objects of knowledge. On the other hand, foundational knowledge or philosophical ontology are not mechanisms and structures since these are independent of our knowledge. Instead they play the role of linking the two through the scientific activity of the scientist who adheres to them. The reason why a scientist would seek knowledge about structures of international relations using theories of international relations is because of his/her foundational knowledge that the structures of international relations as intransitive objects of knowledge are independent, stratified, and feature depth and that theories and models of International Relations might lead us to know more about them. Likewise, the reason why a Muslim researcher would seek knowledge about Islamic agency in international relations is because of his/her foundational knowledge summed up in the four principles mentioned above.

The independent, stratified, and deep nature of reality, according to the philosophical ontology of critical realism, means that as intransitive objects of knowledge the structures and mechanisms of international relations are social arrangements within the wider social world and are conditioned by deeper universal laws of social reality. These universal laws are understood in Islam as “Sunan” that transcends different social arrangements which will be explored in chapter three. For now the point to keep in mind is that the stratification and depth of the intransitive dimension of reality gives coherence to the division of labour between the transitive objects of knowledge that the Muslim IR researcher has in his stock that include, on the one hand, general Islamic descriptions and moral assessments about human nature and a set of normative and universal social laws about the totality of the social world, and on the other hand, more specific and

descriptive explanatory tools for the mechanisms and structures of the particular social arrangement of international relations offered by western IR theory. It also suggests that the social arrangement of international relations cannot be studied apart from the universal laws of the totality of the social world. Accordingly, producing Islamic knowledge about international relations should utilize the two sets of transitive knowledge, although giving priority to Islamic transitive objects of knowledge because, first, they are derived from his/her foundational commitment, and second, because of the stratified nature of the intransitive dimension where the laws of the social world condition different social arrangements.

However, given that the two sets of transitive knowledge are based on different foundational commitments conflict on the theoretical and ontological level arises. If the Muslim IR researcher extends his general Islamic knowledge about the social world to explain and understand the specifics of the social arrangements of international relations without “technical aid” from western IR theory then his work will likely lack analytical sharpness and relevance. If he chooses to uncritically utilize theories and models of international relations then their philosophical foundations are likely to push aside Islamic transitive knowledge about the social world derived from Islamic foundational knowledge. This is where the challenge of developing a theory of Islamic agency in international relations is clearest. Such an exercise involves re-describing the embedded context of Islamic agents according to Islamic ontological principles and normative positions. To achieve this, an Islamic description of reality should be in place. This description is offered by Islamic transitive objects of knowledge that can only be adopted when the researcher adheres to Islamic foundational commitments.

The presence of Islamic agency (The Muslim IR researcher) at the level of knowledge production must be complemented by a balanced epistemic access to the subject matter, one that

takes account of the specialized knowledge of agents under study and the concept-dependent nature of all social structures on the one hand, and the stratification and depth of social reality on the other hand. This suggests taking the concepts and ideas of the agents concerned, or the “interpretative moment” as the starting point of investigation, given, of course, that such investigation is based on Islamic foundational commitments.

That said, the agents concerned, in this case Islamic agents, might have partial or false concepts and ideas about their structural contexts and conditions of production. This brings to light the following moment or stage of Islamic knowledge production: that is a normative critique and moral assessment of the beliefs held by Islamic agents about their activities and conditions of those activities according to Islamic moral guidelines. Jackson’s example of hesitating to condemn “ethnic cleansing” is a good example of the need for such “outside” moral assessment because Islamic higher values might not be realized within the context of embedment of Islamic agents or statespeople, namely, contemporary international relations. The next stage is an explanatory critique of the causal and constitutive relationships that facilitate the reproduction of such beliefs, in other words, an effort to explain why such “false” or partial “beliefs” were held and reproduced. Here is where western social and IR theory make their clearest contribution. Despite the claim that Western IR theory reproduces theoretical barriers that could stand between the beliefs of the Muslim IR researcher about the totality of the social world, and the beliefs of Islamic agents about their own context, it is only through knowledge of Western IR’s theories, assumptions and explanatory tools that a critique can be offered of the constitutive and causal relationships that are thought to help reproduce the partial or false beliefs of Islamic agents about their structure.

This calls for interrogating the role western IR theory plays in reproducing those partial or false beliefs. Such an effort must be reflective enough to put forward a critique of how western IR theory describes, explains, and reproduces those causal and constitutive relationships that in turn feed into the conceptions and beliefs of the agents concerned. The final stage of the activity of extending Islamic knowledge to international relations is the re-description of the agents' world or context of embedment according to Islamic descriptions. Again, western IR theory can help at this stage, simply because explanatory critique is inherently part of re-description; as uncovering an unnecessary structural force, for example, necessarily shed lights on a "forgotten" agential quality. Once the beliefs and conceptions of Islamic agents about their activities in their social arrangements are morally assessed according to Islamic moral guidelines, and the structural possibilities of their transformative agential actions are ontologically "corrected" according to Islamic descriptions of the reality of the social world, then a knowledge-seeking path to the intransitive objects of knowledge that satisfies the Islamic foundational commitments of the Muslim IR researcher is possible.

***Conclusion:***

The central argument of this chapter was that an adequate conceptualization of Islamic agency needs the agency of a Muslim IR researcher. This was further demonstrated by emphasizing the point that if the Muslim IR researcher is not free from certain epistemological/ontological principles that come with western IR theoretical frameworks, neither can the conceptualizations of Islamic agents be freed from structural forces and the resultant ready-made agential platforms. In this light, this chapter was an attempt to remove the foundational barriers of western IR theory in order to set the ground for constructing a shared ontology where the knowledge of the Muslim IR researcher can be linked to the ideas and concepts of Islamic agents in international relations.

The next chapter constructs this shared Islamic ontology in the form of *field of Estekhlaf* where the Islamic agent will be operating under the label of “*Khalifah*”. Then IR theory can be called upon to help in navigating the complexity of the socialization of the “*Khalifah*” within the social arrangements of contemporary international relations; of course under the supervision of the Muslim Knowledge seeker.

**Chapter Three**  
***Reclaiming Reality: “I will create a Khalifah...”***

Chapter two was an attempt to free the activity of seeking knowledge about Islamic agency in international relations from philosophical foundations in western IR theory by insisting on the commitments of Muslim IR researchers to Islamic sources of knowledge (epistemology) and descriptions of reality (ontology). The argument was that a theory of Islamic agency in international relations must be developed on Islamic foundations. This chapter proposes *Estekhlaf* (Vice-regency) as an Islamic ontological foundation that can host a theory of Islamic agency. In this context the chapter will endeavour to reclaim reality for an Islamic ontology of *Estekhlaf*, by reclaiming the constitution of both human agency and “earth” for *Allah* (SWT) as the creator and endower of the properties and nature of both, the latter as a “field of *Estekhlaf*” (field of Vice-regency) and the former as *Khalifah* (Vice-regent).

By the end of this chapter we should have an Islamic view of agency defined by the role of *Khalifah* and expressed as “endowed, embodied, intentional action”; an Islamic criterion for conceptualization of the structure of man-made social arrangements that insists on the presence of material, ideational, and relational dimensions of reality, and a subsequent Islamic criterion for agent-structure solutions. That said, it is important to mention that once an Islamic ontology is outlined through the notion of *Estekhlaf*, there will not be any “invention” of Islamic explanatory tools to further develop Islamic concepts and solutions for agent- structure relationships. Instead this effort will draw from western social and IR theoretical tools, which fits

the theme of this project as one of mutual borrowing that preserves Islamic ontological and normative principles while making use of western social and IR theoretical tools to express them.

In this light, section one will introduce and articulate the notion of *Estekhlaf* as a superstructure defined by a number of relationships; two relationships of endowment linking both human agency and earth to *Allah* (SWT). It is by virtue of these relationships that both human agency and earth are constituted with their basic nature and properties. A third relationship of embedment links human agency and earth. The logic of this presentation is to claim constitution of both agency and its social and material contexts for an Islamic ontology prior to proposing ways of linking them through man-made tools like agent-structure solutions.

Section two looks at the agential capacities as constituted through the relationship of endowment between *Allah* (SWT) and human agency. Drawing on Islamic resources and western notions of agency, namely, Spivak's work on agency, and Colin Wight's notion of agency as "embodied, intentional praxis"; freedom of subjectivity, intentionality and accountability will be captured as necessary elements of agency, only re-directed and "re-sorted" to fit the relationship of endowment. At this stage the Islamic view of agency as defined by the role of *Khalifah* will appear as "endowed, intentional action" awaiting attachment of a notion of embedment in order to reflect the social dimension of the *Khalifah*.

Section three does just that, although on an Islamic ontological criterion that presents "earth" as a field of *Estekhlaf* endowed with the necessary conditions of production for performing the mission of *Estekhlaf*. This will require a conceptualization of structure that does not hinder the effort to "re-insert" the relationship of embedment between human agents and the earth in the superstructure of *Estekhlaf*. This will be achieved through Wight's proposal of conceptualizing



social structures as the relations between Bhaskar's four planes of social activity (material interaction, inter-subjectivity, social relations, and subjectivity).<sup>1</sup>

The last section will bring the Islamic view of agency into action through Bhaskar's transformational model of social activity, which will be demonstrated as offering an acceptable agent-structure solution by allowing the *Khalifah* to act with awareness of both his endowed and embodied dimensions. Thus the section ends with a view of agency that satisfies the Islamic ontological principle by allowing a space for agential awareness of their position in the superstructure of *Estekhlaf* and hence their accountability before *Allah* (SWT) and, yet, socially-intelligible enough to embody any social role, granting access to socialization and material interaction under any man-made social arrangement.

### ***The Superstructure of Estekhlaf: Allah (SWT)<sup>2</sup>, Man, and Earth***

*Behold the Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vice-regent (Khalifah) on earth." They said: "Wilt thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?" He said: "I know what ye know not.*

*(Quran: 2:29)*

The above Quranic verse provides humanity with the essence, origin, and source of their agency, which can be summed up under the role of vice-regents of *Allah* (SWT) on earth. Vice-regency (*Estekhlaf*) is a relationship, one that logically involves authorization for action, a given mission

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<sup>1</sup> Colin Wight, "Agents, Structures, and International Relations: Politics as Ontology", (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p.77.

<sup>2</sup> It must be noted here that having Allah (SWT) as part of a structure might not seem appropriate to some Muslim readers. The reason is that one of the attributes of Allah (SWT) is "Al-Samad" meaning "self-sufficient" which further means that Allah (SWT) does not enter into relationships for the sake of satisfying needs, indeed he is elevated from such claims, for example the relationship of "father (God)-son (Jesus)" is rejected in Islam because it implies that by entering into a relationship as a "father" to a "son" Allah (SWT) is satisfying the "needs of a father" from such a relationship, which does not fit the attribute of "Al-Samad". The point in this section is different, Allah (SWT) enters this relationship as endower, giver, to both human agents and earth, thus the insistence on those relationships being one-way constitutive relationships is preserved.

to be performed, a set of guidelines to perform it, and accountability for the quality of performance. In virtue of this relationship, human action, capacities, and agency can be understood as authorized, even endowed, to perform the mission of vice-regency (*Estekhlaf*). This is also apparent from the text of the verse “I will create” which further means that the nature and properties of human agents have been given, or to use modern social scientific language, constituted, by *Allah* (SWT). In this sense, whether it is biological makeup, or cognitive capacities like intentionality, human properties do not fall onto a vacuum but rather are claimed for the role of Vice-regent (*Khalifah*) as constituted in virtue of its relationship to *Allah* (SWT).

The verse does not stop here; the phrase “on earth” specifies the context of performing the mission of *Estekhlaf*: that is earth, which could be described, again using modern social scientific language, as a “field of *Estekhlaf*”. This brings to light another one-way constitutive relationship, this time between *Allah* (SWT) and “earth”. Where *Allah* (SWT) created, and thus constituted, “earth” as a context for performing the mission of *Estekhlaf* by the *Khalifah*. What we have now is two constitutive relationships, the first between *Allah* (SWT) and human agency which constitutes each and every human agent with the role of vice-regent or *Khalifah* of *Allah* (SWT) endowed with the necessary capacities to undertake the mission of *Estekhlaf*; and second, between *Allah* (SWT) and earth, where earth is constituted as a field of *Estekhlaf* endowed with the necessary resources to “welcome” the mission of *Estekhlaf*. If these two relationships are defined by endowment, then a third relationship, linking human agency to earth, or the *Khalifah* to the field of *Estekhlaf*, could be defined by embedment. Thus, from the phrase: “*I will create a vice-regent (Khalifah) on earth*”, a relational superstructure<sup>3</sup> can be derived, one that links

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<sup>3</sup> The label “superstructure” is inspired by Honderich’s definition of “superstructure of known truth” which is the product or rests on indubitable beliefs. A belief in this Quranic verse is indubitable to Muslims, and the

human agency and earth to *Allah* (SWT). In virtue of its position in this superstructure human agency is endowed in relation to *Allah* (SWT) and embedded in relation to earth.

A number of advantages of articulating *Estekhlaf* as a superstructure can be identified at this stage; first, the superstructure of *Estekhlaf* not only brings the spiritual and social dimensions of the Islamic view of agency together in one account, but also gives their linkage a structural expression. Human agency is endowed, that is authorized and accountable before *Allah* (SWT), in virtue of a structural position, yet, at the same time, it is embedded, that is, it is socially and materially operationalizable also by virtue of the same structural position. This, in turn, ensures that this Islamic account of agency conforms to an Islamic worldview through transcending the secular/religious divide, which could be viewed as a basic barrier to theorizing Islamic agency in contemporary social arrangements. In this context, one can argue that traditional Islamic views on agency focus on its endowed nature and the associated authorization and accountability before *Allah* (SWT), while ignoring embedment and operationalization under worldly structures, as made clear by the poverty of structural theorization in Islamic literature. Modern western literature, including western IR theory, in contrast, could be viewed as mirror image of Islamic literature where the focus is on embedment, one that cuts all links between social agency and *Allah* (SWT) at the “borders” of the social world. Second, articulating earth as one element that is in a relationship with human agency can contribute to capturing an agential capacity that Islam and other religions insist on, which is the capacity to totalize one’s own context of embedment in order to maintain a high level of awareness and reflexivity; a capacity that modern social sciences are still reluctant to concede to human agents. Moreover, and on the theoretical level,

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superstructure of *Estekhlaf* is then an Islamic superstructure of known truth that, in turn, further propositions about knowledge of different social arrangements can be inferred from.

the totalization of earth as a context of embedment can also contribute to avoiding separating different social arrangements, treating each as a closed system with a unique set of moral standards immune from general moral guidelines, as is the case with Jackson's representation of the "international" introduced in chapter two. Instead, for a project that aims at extending Islamic knowledge and moral guidelines to the realm of contemporary international relations, articulating "earth" as one social and material space becomes an advantage.

The fact remains, however, that none of us is born with a sign on his/her forehead that reads "Khalifah of Allah (SWT) on earth". Rather we are born in already constructed social arrangements populated with social and institutional facts that may, or may not, feature meanings and norms of *Estekhlaf*, even implicitly, in the sense of acting with a sense of moral responsibility before *Allah* (SWT). Of course this could be seen as yet another barrier to expressing the role of *Khalifah* as constitutive of human agency. Yet, understanding the relationship of endowment between *Allah* (SWT) and human agents as one of authorization and accountability requires the presence of certain endowed capacities, the most important of which is freedom of subjectivity, without which authorization and accountability that underline the mission of *Estekhlaf* become redundant. In this case, a *Khalifah* is always a "free" agent, who can accept or reject, submit or rebel against the requirements of this role, yet, he/she will always be a *Khalifah*, the freedom is to be a "good or "bad", "submissive" or "rebellious" *Khalifah*. It is not a coincidence that the literal meaning of Islam is "submission", which taken in this context can only mean voluntary and "free" submission to the requirements of the role of *Khalifah*. The Quran makes this freedom of choice a clear principle in the following verse: "*Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from Error*"<sup>4</sup> Moreover, submission, or Islam, to

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<sup>4</sup> Quran (2:256)

the requirements of the role of *Khalifah*, can also mean that a Muslim is one who acknowledges the source of his/her agency as endowed and authorized from *Allah* (SWT), one who submits to guidelines given by *Allah* (SWT) to live a pure and successful life on earth, and one who acknowledges his/her accountability before *Allah* (SWT) for their actions.

It is understood that the relationship of embedment between human agency and “earth” might be the only relationship that is recognizable to western audiences among the relationships that make up the superstructure of *Estekhlaf*. Yet, for an Islamic based theoretical knowledge to commence within the limits set by this relationship is to concede too much ontological ground to western ontology. Instead, the Islamic ontological move that is proposed in this section is to re-insert the relationship of embedment between human agency and their worldly structure into the superstructure of *Estekhlaf*. This does not only help in reclaiming understanding of agency for an Islamic ontology, but subsequently also conditions the relationship between agency and worldly structures according to the constitutive superstructure of *Estekhlaf*. For our purposes in this chapter, when we are faced with a certain agent-structure solution from western social and IR theory, we now have an Islamic ontological landscape where the solution is assessed according to the superstructure of *Estekhlaf*. More specifically, such a solution is to be assessed according to the constituted properties and nature of both agency and worldly structures, the former as *Khalifah*, and the latter as field of *Estekhlaf*, and whether the proposed solution to their relationship “fits” in this wider ontology. For example, if an agent-structure solution denies agency the basic capacity of freedom of subjectivity then it is to be rejected from an Islamic perspective since it is likely to “imprison” human agency within the limits of embedment in worldly structures and deny it the capacity to reflect on its basic role as *Khalifah*, and by extension the relationship of authorization and accountability before *Allah* (SWT).

Now that the landscape that hosts all social arrangements is claimed for the field of *Estekhlaf*, and human agency is claimed for the role of *Khalifah*, a move from the ontological to the substantive is needed. This move entails introducing what the mission of *Estekhlaf* involves; Following Jaber Al-alwani, this chapter views the mission of *Estekhlaf* as one based on three pillars: First, *Tawhid*: The observation and belief in *Allah* (SWT) as the only God. Second, *Tazkiyah*: moral purification. Third: *Omran*: material development.<sup>5</sup> The following discussion introduces each pillar before explaining the relationship between them.

*The Mission of Estekhlaf: Tawhid, Tazkiyah, and Omran:*

*Tawhid* is a testimony that only *Allah* (SWT) is worthy of worship as the creator and sustainer of the universe. It is a testimony that one understands and appreciates the attributes and actions of *Allah* (SWT). *Allah* (SWT) is the creator of all things, including human beings and earth; he is the most knowledgeable, wise, merciful, loving, and forgiving. He loves, protects, and guides his slaves. The following short story of the prophet Mohammad (PBUH) shows how knowledge of the attributes of *Allah* (SWT), like mercy, is central to the Islamic faith: “The prophet (PBUH) was watching a mother so mercifully holding her child; he then asked, “Do you think this woman will cast her own child into fire?” Those present said “No”, the prophet (PBUH) said “Verily God is more compassionate on his creatures, than this woman on her own child”.<sup>6</sup>

On another occasion the prophet (PBUH) says,”God says: O son of Adam, as long as you call upon Me and put your hope in Me, I have forgiven you for what you have done and I do not mind. O son of Adam, if your sins were to reach the clouds of the sky, and then you would seek my forgiveness, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, if you were to come to Me with sins that

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<sup>5</sup> Jaber Al-alwani, introduction to first volume of ‘International Relations in Islam’ (Virginia, International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1996) p.18

<sup>6</sup> Narrated By Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

are close to filling the earth and then you would meet Me without ascribing any partners with Me, I would certainly bring to you forgiveness close to filling the earth”.<sup>7</sup>

Mind here the phrase “without ascribing partners with me”, which highlights the idea of observing the oneness, or *Tawhid* of *Allah* (SWT). In other words, it highlights that *Tawhid* involves a belief that no one should compete with *Allah* (SWT) in the heart and mind of the Muslim when directing love, hope, and fear. Such an effort of directing feelings associated with intentional action is based on a belief that needs will be best satisfied through such a relationship. In this regard, Abdullah Ibn Abbas, a companion of the prophet (PBUH) said:

One day, I was with the prophet (PBUH), he said to me: ‘O young man, I am going to teach you some words: Be mindful of Allah, and He will protect you. Be mindful of Allah, and you will find him facing you. If you ask, then ask of Allah. If you seek aid, then seek aid in Allah. And know that if all of humankind were to gather in order to benefit you with something, they could not benefit you with anything except with that which Allah has willed for you. And if the entire humankind were to gather in order to harm you with something, they could not harm you with anything except with that which *Allah* (SWT) has willed against you. The pen has been lifted and the pages have dried.’<sup>8</sup>

A rather sudden switch to western IR theory can contribute to illuminating the meaning of *Tawhid*; recalling Wendt’s “significant other”, as an example, who sets the ground for cultural transformation in the international society through different capacities and means including the use of force and coercion.<sup>9</sup> *Tawhid* here means that despite the pressure that the relationship with the “significant other” could place on the Islamic agent, the direction and substance of action should remain directed towards *Allah* (SWT) not the “significant other”. To illuminate further in contemporary terms, one could replace the words in the saying of the prophet (PBUH) as follows “...and know that if all the members of the international society were to gather in order to benefit

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<sup>7</sup> Narrated by Al-Tirmithi

<sup>8</sup> Abu-Zakariyah Yahia Al-Nawawi, ‘ Alarba’in Alnawawiyah’ no. 19

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Wendt ‘Social Theory of International Politics’ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1999) p.268

you with something, they could not benefit you with anything except with that which Allah has willed for you. And if all the members of the international society were to gather in order to harm you with something, they could not harm you with anything except with what Allah (SWT) has willed against you. The pen has been lifted and the pages have dried”. Although discussions of the role *Tawhid* plays in understanding the socialization experience of Islamic agents will be taken up in chapters six and seven, it is sufficient here to appreciate how reclaiming the ontological landscape gives concepts of Islamic agents more “freedom” in facing processes and operations like coercion, calculations, and even internalization when operationalized under structures of international relations

The second pillar of the mission of *Estekhlaf* is *Tazkiyah*, the rough English translation of which is “purification”. Indeed, purification captures to a great extent the meaning of *Tazkiyah*, save that in Islamic literature purification is usually associated with discipline, in the sense of one disciplining his/her self to conduct their behavior according to high moral standards as guided by Islamic sources, more specifically, disciplining one’s self involves working with natural desires and needs, not to suppress them, but rather to express them in the right way. In this sense, *Tazkiyah* or purification, is an agential effort that is usually referred to as “self-purification”. In a way, the use of *Tazkiyah* to capture the moral dimension of agency suggests that the self acknowledges the good and the bad, and is capable of an effort of purification that involves limiting the “bad” and improving the “good”. The following Quranic verses clarify this meaning: “*By the self and Him who perfected it, and inspired it with what is wrong for it and what is right for it. Truly he succeeds who purifies it (zakkaha). And he fails that corrupts it*”<sup>10</sup>. The use of the word “inspired” which is a translation of the word “*Alhamaha*” cannot fully convey the meaning

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<sup>10</sup> Quran (91: 7-10)



here, which can better be captured by the phrase “gave hint to”. This distinction is important because it demonstrates that these verses insist that there is nothing inevitable about the goodness or badness of human nature. Rather, it is a human responsibility to follow the good and limit the bad in an effort of *Tazkiyah* or purification.

Moreover, despite the focus on the individual level of *Tazkiyah*, collective purification in the sense of maintaining a moral order is strongly present in Islamic thought. In other words, the public sphere in Islam is not immune from observing *Tazkiyah*. This is simply a necessary extension to *Tazkiyah* at the individual level, since this inner moral struggle involves understanding, appreciation, and application of Islamic higher moral values like justice, mercy, forgiveness, etc. all of which can only be expressed through social action, action that is, to use Weber’s simple and elegant definition, “oriented towards, and takes account of, the behaviour of others”.<sup>11</sup> Islam is indeed, a religion of collective morals; huge parts of the main Islamic sources (Quran, and Sunnah) provide Muslims with moral guidelines on how to lead a pure and moral life not only on the individual level but also on the collective level. Furthermore, those guidelines are not viewed merely as guidelines that should govern human behavior in disconnected events and situations, rather, they are viewed as a moral system that guides human interaction in different social arrangements from marriage to the economy. A recent Lecture on “The concept of Tazkiyah on Quran” held by the center of Epistemological Studies in Cairo where Muslim Scholars, mainly associated with the International Institute of Islamic Thought, have confirmed this collective dimension of *Tazkiyah*. Insisting that *Tazkiyah* should not be

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<sup>11</sup> M. Weber, ‘Economy and Society’ [1922] (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968) cited in Martin Hollis and Steve Smith ‘Explaining and Understanding International Relations’ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) p.72

confined to the individual level but should be applied to the whole of society and the public sphere.<sup>12</sup>jj

The third pillar of the mission of *Estekhlaf* is *Omran*, that is, material development. It basically captures human interaction with the material context. In Arabic language and Islamic literature the meaning implies an effort of transformation and the betterment of material conditions. It is usually utilized to encounter more purely spiritual strands of Islam like Sufism which is seen by mainstream Muslims as discouragement to material improvements of Muslims and their efforts to improve their material conditions. Instead, the presence of *Omran* suggests that the positive impact *Tawhid* and *Tazkiyah* can have on the Muslim individual or society should be realized in the material dimension by having Islamic values and moral guidelines conditioning material pursuits. This takes us to the morally elevated description of *Omran* and its relationship to moral purification or *Tazkiyah* as it does not offer a neutral image of interaction with material context, but insists on the usefulness of the resultant “products” of this interaction to the individual and society. For example, building a factory to manufacture food products is *Omran*, building a factory to produce beer is not!

The way the pillars of the mission of *Estekhlaf* manifest themselves seems to suggest a set of relationships among them or a hierarchal configuration that gives coherence and predictability to observing, performing and theorizing the mission of *Estekhlaf*. These hierarchal relationships capture an image where every pillar is linked, gives meaning to, and conditions the next pillar. Taking it from the bottom, it could be argued that satisfying material needs through interaction with nature must be governed and conditioned by meanings and guidelines of *Tazkiyah* in order

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<sup>12</sup> International Institute of Islamic Thought:  
<http://arabic.iiit.org/Default.aspx?tabid=71&articleType=ArticleView&articleId=22>

to be classified as *Omran* and not simply as “aimless” material pursuit. Whilst following those guidelines of *Tazkiyah* is in turn conditioned by *Tawhid* or a belief in the oneness of *Allah* (SWT). Since there exist in the social world alternative guidelines for moral development, it is only through *Tawhid* that one can explain why an individual or society adheres to the Islamic guidelines of *Tazkiyah* rather than, for example, to western liberal values. This relational configuration must always be present when explaining Islamic agential action in order to avoid partial explanations, as offered by rational/material based explanations, or purely man-made descriptions and characterization of action as offered by reflectivist/ideationalist based explanations. Both seem to capture only one pillar or dimension of the structural resources/constraints where the mission of *Estekhlaf* takes place.

Given this discussion, a theory of Islamic agency not only needs relational/inter-subjective/material layers in order to capture its embedded dimension, but also a theoretical space to capture the hierarchal relationships between *Tawhid*, *Tazkiyah*, and *Omran*. As demonstrated above, however, embedment in earth as a field of *Estekhlaf* is only one relationship in the superstructure of *Estekhlaf* that partly constitutes the role of *Khalifah*, the other relationship between *Allah* (SWT) and human agency constitutes, or endows, the *Khalifah* with the necessary agential capacities to undertake the mission of *Estekhlaf*. Indeed, from the above discussion we can see it is a challenging mission which allows human agency to make use of and encounter structural resources and constraints; yet without losing sight of their role as vice-regents of *Allah* (SWT) on earth and the associated authorization and accountability that define their agential pursuits on earth. The next section looks at those capacities that serve as the properties and nature of agency prior to operationalization in the social world.

### ***Endowment: The Making of a Khalifah***

The last section was an attempt to place agency, or more specifically human agency, in its place within the Islamic ontology of *Estekhlaf*. The discussion resulted in specifying two dimensions of human agency: endowment and embedment. While endowment was acknowledged as involving those properties of human agency as constituted by *Allah* (SWT), embedment captures socially driven capacities, or liabilities, that come from placement within the social field. This section is concerned with the former.

This distinction between pre-social agential capacities and socially driven ones is not exactly peculiar to western IR theory, although in the Islamic case, endowment seems to capture more than just “human nature”, or physical makeup, prior to exploring the social dimension of agency. A good example from the field comes from Nicholas Onuf, who says that, “we are physical beings capable of living in, and acting on, the world only as social beings, agency is a social condition”.<sup>13</sup> From an *Estekhlaf* point of view, Onuf is right about the fact that we can only act on the world as social beings, as captured by the embedded dimension of the *Khalifah*, his conclusion that agency is a social condition is only partly true. Onuf’s views on reality are very close to those of Kratochwil’s, whose views on reality beyond man-made meanings were discussed in chapter two. The two theorists are likely to believe that the fact that we are “physical beings” is not important or significant to understanding agency in the social world. Rather, it is the social relations, rules, and meanings that construct agency. An Islamic theory of agency cannot afford to make this direct intrusion into the social world, because minus the social conditions of agency, we are not *just* physical beings. Rather, according to the ontology of

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<sup>13</sup> Nicholas Onuf, ‘Worlds of our Making: The Strange Career of a Constructivism in International Relations’ in Donald Puchala ‘Visions of International Relations: Assessing the Academic Field’ (South Carolina University Press, 2002) p35.

*Estekhlaf*, we are vice-regents of *Allah* (SWT) with already constituted human qualities beyond our physical make up. This section focuses on those human qualities or capacities that make us capable of, “living in and acting on the social world”.

Endowment implies a number of capacities that were touched on in the previous section; this section looks in more detail at those capacities and claims them for the Islamic view of agency. Not surprisingly, given the approach of mutual borrowing of this project, capacities associated with endowment can find an expression in the work of a western scholar namely, Gayatri Spivak. She summarizes her views on agency as follows “Agency relates to accountable reason. The idea of agency comes from the principle of accountable reason: that one acts with responsibility, that one has to assume the possibility of intention, one has to assume even the freedom of subjectivity in order to be responsible. That is where agency is located”.<sup>14</sup>

The convenience of Spivak’s understanding of agency for expressing the Islamic understanding of agency is striking, to say the least, as both stress a number of qualities that should underlie any theory of agency in the social world: freedom of subjectivity, intentionality, and accountability. The way the relationship of endowment was introduced in section one emphasized both freedom of subjectivity and accountability as necessary elements for understanding the endowed nature of human agency as defined through the role of *Khalifah*. Borrowing intentionality from Spivak’s view above is not only a logical extension of the Islamic emphasis on freedom of subjectivity but will prove fruitful in capturing the agential effort of directing action towards satisfying moral responsibility and accountability before *Allah* (SWT).

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<sup>14</sup> Gayatri Spivak ‘Sublateral Talk: Interview with the editors’. In the Spivak Reader, edited by D. Landry and G. Maclean (London: Routledge, 1996) p.294

Very little literature in western IR theory treats these three qualities as essential to agency; of course the reason being that mainstream western IR theory starts “working on” agency at the corporate level that allows very narrow space for such discussion. Again, Critical Realists seem to offer a lifeline for bringing human qualities to IR theory’s understanding of agency and subsequently a space for Islamic view of agency as essentially human. Prior to his personification move in *Social Theory of International Politics*, Wendt offers what could be a fruitful discussion in humanizing, and subsequently Islamizing, agency in international relations. His discussion of agential qualities “beyond the rationalist model of man”,<sup>15</sup> introduces an alternative, more humane equation of action. This equation of intentional action is, of course, welcomed by all those who are struggling to find a space for theorizing faith-based agents in international relations. Sadly, though, it is not too long before all variables (desire and belief) in the equation of intentional action are located within the state and then “submitted” to structural forces of social construction. Human qualities, the most important of which is freedom of subjectivity, are lost to structural forces.

Conversely, Colin Wight explicitly builds his own theory of agency on Spivak’s three elements of agency, only wedded to Buzan’s notion of “power to act”<sup>16</sup>, and Bhaskar’s notion of embodiment<sup>17</sup> which results in defining agency in the social world as “embodied intentional action/praxis”<sup>18</sup>. The approach in this section builds on Wight’s by deriving an Islamic view of

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<sup>15</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p.116

<sup>16</sup> Colin Wight, *Agents, Structures, and International Relations: Politics as Ontology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p.206

<sup>17</sup> Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p.212

<sup>18</sup> Wight ends up proposing a multi-layered conception of agency that includes: subjectivity of the agent, context of embedment, and social roles. Labeling them, correspondingly: Agency1, Agency2, and Agency3. This is indeed an attractive line of inquiry to follow in conceptualizing Islamic agency. For example one could think of assigning the label “Agency 0” to the Khalifah to capture and add the endowed nature of agency to the other layers. As attractive as it is, the choice here is to refrain from going down that path for two reasons, first, to preserve the role of the Khalifah as “the champion” of Islamic view of agency, and second, to preserve a wider space for articulating the

human agency that draws from different sources, in this respect, and leaving the embedded/embodied dimension to the next section, the aim is to arrive at a notion of agency as “endowed, intentional action/praxis”, that is, Wight’s conception of agency only wedded to endowment. The following discussion demonstrates how freedom of subjectivity, intentionality, and accountability can be claimed for, or contributes to, expressing, endowment and subsequently an Islamic view of agency.

*Freedom of Subjectivity, Intentionality, and Accountability...Essential Agency:*

Freedom of subjectivity as an essential element of human agency is well grounded in the Islamic belief system. One can even argue that such a principle underlies the Islamic faith, which is built on the idea of voluntary and free choice of submitting to *Allah* (SWT). The following saying of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) demonstrates that freedom of subjectivity is an inherent property that human agents cannot be stripped of: “When one of you see an evil-doing, he should change it with his hands, if he can’t, then with his tongue (speech), if he can’t, then with his heart, and this is the weakest form of faith”.<sup>19</sup> In this saying freedom of subjectivity appears as the most basic agential capacity, even a platform that underlies other agential capacities, which makes it inalienable property of human agency. Taken in this context, this saying provides levels of agential capacities and efforts where freedom of subjectivity (heart in the saying above) is the most basic that all others depend on. In a way, it is the last agential refuge when structural forces become so constraining on action and even speech. While the prophet (PBUH) would like to see Muslims take a more active role in facing evil-doing with actions and speech, he acknowledges

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relationship and balance between the endowed and embedded dimensions of Agency according to the superstructure of Estekhalf.

<sup>19</sup> Narrated by Al-Bukhari

the constraints that might block such activity, yet he does not accept constraints on freedom of subjectivity as an excuse. This meaning finds expression not just in Spivak's elements of agency but also in Wight's discussion. He takes the point further by taking Postmodernists and their notions of "death of subject" as a target, where he makes an argument that despite the social construction forces of culture and discourse, there is still a "self" that is never automatically or deterministically instituted, a "self" which is in relationship to the world by which it is constructed...capable of reflecting upon, and constantly renegotiating, the forces of construction.<sup>20</sup> It is exactly these capacities of reflecting upon and constantly renegotiating the forces of construction that are needed in order to maintain an Islamic view of agency especially when embedded in modern social/institutional arrangements.

The second element of Spivak's conception of agency is intentionality. There is, however, a usual tendency to conflate freedom of subjectivity with intentionality, one that is mirrored in literature in international relations that chooses to work with those elements of agency. For example, in developing his theory of agency Wight deals in a rather lengthy fashion with freedom of subjectivity but then automatically assigns intentionality to his agents, without further exploration of the term "intentionality" per se. Wendt, on the other hand, focuses on intentionality and ignores freedom of subjectivity<sup>21</sup>. The view in this section, however, is that intentionality is a function of freedom of subjectivity; freedom of subjectivity is more basic than intentionality, that is, freedom of subjectivity is a state of being, while intentionality is a capacity or cognitive creativity to direct one's needs and actions according to his belief system. In this context, Wendt's introduction of the equation of intentional action as (Belief +Desire) is

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<sup>20</sup> Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p. 210

<sup>21</sup> See Wendt's discussion on "beyond the rationalist model" in chapter three of "Social Theory of International Politics".



significant to improve western understanding of agency in international relations. Yet, Wendt lets this equation fall into a vacuum and subsequently offers it, specifically the belief side of the equation, as an empty cognitive platform to be filled by culture, which in turn directs the desires and action of agents towards shared culture.<sup>22</sup>

Instead, and to better express the Islamic view of agency as defined by the role of *Khalifah*, the intentional equation of action must fall onto the platform of freedom of subjectivity, so when put forth under culture, beliefs (identity), and desires (interests) are protected against the theoretical activity of automatic construction by culture. Underlined by freedom of subjectivity, intentionality is better equipped to feature higher levels of cognitive creativity and reflexivity that can allow an agent to negotiate the forces of construction instead of automatically reproducing them.

This articulation of the relationship between freedom of subjectivity and intentionality is important in expressing the Islamic view of agency as both endowed and embedded. The point is that while both freedom of subjectivity and intentionality are endowed in human beings as essential elements of their agency; freedom of subjectivity is assured and protected by *Allah* (SWT) since without it the relationship of authorization and accountability between *Allah* (SWT) and human agents becomes redundant. Intentionality is what human agents operate with under embedment, it is their tool to direct their actions, whether according to following the guidelines of *Estekhlaf*, or alternatively according to man-made social arrangements.

This leads to the third element of agency, which is accountability. Again, the issue here is one of direction. As human agents, we all have a sense of accountability and moral responsibility for

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<sup>22</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, chapters three and four.

our intentional actions. The issue is towards whom should we direct this accountability and moral responsibility? Acknowledgment of endowment of agential capacities by *Allah* (SWT), takes the direction of accountability to *Allah* (SWT). And hence the relationship of authorization and accountability is in place. Another element of agency which Wight attaches to Spivak's three elements, namely: freedom of subjectivity, intentionality, and accountability, is "the power to do".<sup>23</sup> This is the least problematic agential capacity since those who see the world either through material lenses or cultural ones seem to agree on its role in explaining outcomes, although they might assign different levels of significance to the explanation.

To recap, according to the Islamic ontology of *Estekhlaf* human agency is positioned in a superstructure of Vice-regency where human agents are constituted as Vice-regents of *Allah* (SWT) on earth. Their relationship with *Allah* (SWT) is one of authorization and accountability, where they are endowed with the capacities to perform the mission of *Estekhlaf* (*Tawhid*, *Tazkiyah* and *Omran*). These capacities are intentionality and the power to do, underlined by freedom of subjectivity, which is ensured as essential to the very relationship of authorization and accountability. At this stage, the Islamic view of agency can be captured, as "endowed intentional action". In agent-structure terms, this is the pre-embedment Islamic view on the nature and properties of agency, or to put it in Onuf's words, these are the properties that make us "live in, and act on the social world".<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, any applications and solutions of agent-structure relationship must first take account and build on this notion of agency in order to be compatible with Islamic ontology.

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<sup>23</sup> Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p. 206.

<sup>24</sup> Onuf, *World of Our Making*, p.10.

Yet, as demonstrated through the superstructure of *Estekhlaf* the *Khalifah* has an embedded nature through the relationship with earth as a field of *Estekhlaf*. The next section brings in the embedded dimension of the *Khalifah*, and in the process, lays down the properties and nature of the context of embedment that allows the relationship of embedment between human agency and earth to be in harmony with the overall superstructure of *Estekhlaf*.

### ***Embedment: Earth as a Field of Estekhlaf***

It is understood that the use of the term “earth” to refer to the context of agential experience is quite peculiar to western social and IR theory. The reason for the persistence with the use of the term was to “stick” to the term as it is in the Quranic text: “*I will create a vice-regent (Khalifah) on earth*”. In the context of *Estekhlaf*, “earth”, should be understood as a material/social place that hosts the agential mission of *Estekhlaf*. Thus, it is a “field of *Estekhlaf*”. Just like human agency, earth is in a relationship of endowment with *Allah* (SWT) that constitutes it as a “welcoming” place for the *Khalifah* endowed with the necessary resources and constraints that give the mission of *Estekhlaf* the appropriate level of dignity and creativity as undertaken by human agents. “Earth”, as a material/social place constituted as a field of *Estekhlaf*, has its constituted nature and properties prior to “becoming” a context of embedment just like human agents. While mainstream IR theory usually stresses constraining effects of material and social structures, Islamic literature focuses on the enabling side of structures and the balance between resources and constraints.<sup>25</sup> Such focus however, did not necessarily result in a sophisticated agent-structure solution, but was more of a “natural” extension of Islamic understanding of human purpose and experience. The point is that without resources the mission of *Estekhlaf*

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<sup>25</sup> This is based on the concept of “*Taskhir*” in Quran and Islamic literature which means that Allah (SWT) has made “earth” a suitable place for life and endowed it with the necessary resources for humanity to act. The concept is well grounded in major interpretation of the Quran like Ibn-Katheer, Al-Qurtobi, and Al-Soyouti..

becomes impossible, and without constraints it is “meaningless”. This is based on yet deeper Islamic understanding of human nature and purpose, one that stresses the point that constraints on human action are necessary to give meaning and wisdom to worldviews and outlooks, encourage creativity and serve as reminder of his/her limited capacities compared to the limitless abilities of *Allah* (SWT). In this light, both resources and constraints not only ensure a dignified agential experience for the *Khalifah* and encourage creativity, but also constantly remind human agents of their relationship to *Allah* (SWT). When the resources/constraints balance is favorable they are grateful, when constraints take hold of structural forces, such as when the balance of material capacities become unfavourable, the inter-subjective dimension of a given social arrangement is hostile to Islamic moral guidelines and Muslim’s status in the world are downgraded, they seek help and aid from Him.

In any case, Islamic ontology insists on harmony between the capacities of the *Khalifah* and the properties of the field of *Estekhlaf*. In his book, *The makeup of the Muslim Mind*, Emad Aldeen Khalil, says “...As we move through the Quran, and encounter verses about the creation of the universe and making the conditions convenient for life, we find those conditions originally linked to the awaited role of human beings, to perform it with purpose and coherence”.<sup>26</sup> In another paragraph, and rather more explicitly, he says, “according to Islamic view, Allah (SWT) has specified the world and nature in a way that makes it perfectly convenient for the human being to perform the mission of *Estekhlaf*”.<sup>27</sup> Taking the constraints dimension into account, he adds that the balance is “just right” offering a “suitable challenge” according to human

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<sup>26</sup> Emad-Aldeen Khalil, ‘Hawla Tashkeel Alaql AlMuslim ‘[The Makeup of the Muslim Mind] (Virginia, International Institute of Islamic Thought,1983) p.115

<sup>27</sup> Emad-Aldeen, *The Makeup of the Muslim Mind*, p.117

capacities.<sup>28</sup> Note here a change of direction in assigning ontological burdens, where structure or context of embedment must conform to the agential mission, not the other way around as in most agent-structure solutions in western social and IR theory. This section argues that for the context of embedment to be a welcoming field of *Estekhlaf* it must feature two elements: first, predictability and coherence, and second, the presence of the necessary resources and conditions of production that suit the mission of *Estekhlaf*.

### *Predictability through Sunan*

Predictability naturally implies the presence of a set of laws, rules, etc. that one should follow in order to be able to perform some given mission. One can think of the relationship of predictability and laws and rules by recalling Stephen Krasner's notion of the function of laws in "converging the expectations of actors".<sup>29</sup> Although in this case, it is far from being *just* "around a given issue-area", but covers the whole agential experience and pursuits for the *Khalifah*, and it is not just regulative, as in regime theory, but constitutive of the nature and properties of earth as field of *Estekhlaf*. Those constitutive laws that give human agents a sense of predictability and coherence to their mission are captured in Islam by the concept of "Sunan". In Arabic language and Islamic literature "Sunan" are God-made universal laws that define the working of both nature and society. Sunan can be both material and social. The latter however has clear normative function as it links norms and values, or the pursuits of, to consequences both material and social.<sup>30</sup> For example they link values like justice, mercy, forgiveness, to material and social conditions like equality, trust, cooperation, prosperity. A good example, is offered by Ibn Taimiyah, a thirteenth-century Islamic scholar, who derives from the Quran and Islamic

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<sup>28</sup> Emad-Aldeen, *The Makeup of the Muslim Mind*, p.118

<sup>29</sup> Stephen Krasner ed. 'International Regimes' (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1983)

<sup>30</sup> Baqir Al-sader 'The historical Sunan in the Quran' (Damascus: Taa'arof Press,1989) p.55

resources the following universal law: “Allah will sustain a just state even if it was a state of unbelievers, and will not sustain an unjust state even if it was a state of Muslims”.<sup>31</sup> Here is a Sunnah or a universal law that basically constitutes a relationship between justice and sustainability. The point is that Sunan, or God-made universal laws that relate moral action and normative pursuits to consequences are always in play, the issue is whether man-made frameworks capture this deep constitutive level of reality or limit the findings to man-made tools of observing and describing one dimensional reality.

Sunan, therefore, give predictability and coherence for the mission of *Estekhlaf* both in its material and normative sense. In this context, gravity is also a Sunnah, or universal law, although one that constitutes a physical property of earth as a field of *Estekhlaf*. However, it is necessary for the predictability and coherence of the agential experience and pursuit *Estekhlaf*; a human agent cannot pursue the moral actions of building a mosque, distributing charity, or taking his/her parents for a walk, if the context of embedment did not feature the Sunnah of gravity. The same goes for normative Sunan without them human actions would be aimless. They give human action direction and purpose by expecting an outcome. To put it differently, physical laws give predictability and coherence to man’s interaction with the material world by setting the possibility of such interaction, so do normative Sunan, give predictability and coherence to human action and interaction by setting the possibilities of such interaction. In his book *The Historical Sunan in the Quran*, Mohammad Al-Sader, stresses this quality of Sunan as God-made universal laws, where he explains that Sunan give causality more humane meaning by placing cause and effect in action-purpose relationship rather than in one of necessary

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<sup>31</sup> Ibn Taimiyah ‘Resalat Alhesbah’ in ‘Collection of Fatwas (Al-Riyadh: Revival of Islamic Traditions Press, 1983).

conjecture.<sup>32</sup> He outlines a number of forms and appearances of Sunan in the Quran with a focus on the “conditional form” or “if/then form” which he explains as one way of linking action to consequences.

Equally important for this section is to stress the constitutive rather than the purely regulative nature of Sunan. Sunan constitute not only the rules of the game, but also make the game what it is. It is the constitutive quality of Sunan that allows them to play the role of setting the possibilities and directing expectations about one’s actions and subsequent material and social consequences. It is understood that this point might be hard to reconcile with a “modern” mindset where religion, or religious belief systems, are thought of as a set of regulative rules for behaviour. Yet, when we look at the issue from an Islamic perspective, this is only partly true. The regulative aspect of Islam is regulative in the sense of directing or guiding human action towards a harmonious relationship with reality as constituted by Sunan. Of course human agents are free to direct their intentional actions differently, the point though is to claim the “deep working laws of reality” for religion and place the burden of coming to terms with this reality on human agents and their designed or evolved institutional and social arrangements. This is an important change of angle from the view of modern western social sciences where the burden is on religion and faith based actors to come to terms with the “constitutive reality” of man-made social and institutional arrangements. A good example is the placing of the burden of conformity on states that adhere to “Shari’ah” or Islamic law, as regulative set of laws and rules, when interacting under the “constitutive” reality of international society. Instead, bringing Sunan in posits universal laws that constitute the reality of the social world, placing the burden of conformity on the man-made institutional structure of international society, or more specifically,

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<sup>32</sup> Al-Sader , ‘Historical Sunan in the Quran, p.75

on its underlying normative structure. Moreover, assessing the normative structure of the international society according to Islamic universal laws of Sunan ensures a higher level of predictability for Islamic agents since it places those normative structures in a relationship to their material/social consequences as outlined by Islamic Sunan.

*The conditions of Possibility for Estekhlaf: Material, ideational, and relational dimensions of Reality*

If Sunan set the possibilities of interaction between the *Khalifah* and the field of *Estekhlaf* through assurances of predictability, then the second element that supports a view of a harmonious relationship between human agents and their context of embedment is the presence of the actual conditions of production that allow human agents to utilize their endowed capacities to perform the mission of *Estekhlaf*. Indeed, the field of *Estekhlaf* must feature those “raw” materials that allow human agency to produce man-made material and institutional “products”. That is, in order for the pillar of *Omran*, or material development, to be realized, the *Khalifah* must be embedded in a context that features material resources, while *Tazkiyah* cannot be realized, or held in place, unless the context of embedment features an ideational space or an inter-subjective layer, that can hold meanings, ideas, norms and values of moral purification. And finally a relational layer where the pillar of *Tawhid* can be realized and “tested” against relations with other agents.

Of course, ontologically speaking, the material dimension is the easiest case to make since it is easier to observe a relationship between a material product and its conditions of production. The argument, however, is that just like *Omran* cannot be realized without material resources/structure so *Tazkiyah* and *Tawhid* must supervene on ideational and relational



dimensions of reality. In this respect, it is important to understand that both the ideational and relational dimensions are not theoretical categories but real structural dimensions out there with objective existence just like the material dimension of reality. For example, tanks as man-made products need material resources, but so do capitalism, sovereignty and the modern international society need norms, rules and objective relations of ranking and differentiation in order to be “held in place” as real social and institutional facts. To move one step closer to applying the Islamic ontological landscape of *Estekhlaf* to man-made social arrangements on the field of *Estekhlaf*, including contemporary international relations, we need a conceptualization of structure that captures the relationship of embedment between human agents and their worldly arrangements, yet, which preserves, or at least does not limit, theorizing about the endowed nature and properties of each. More specifically, we need a conceptualization of structure that features material, ideational/inter-subjective, and relational dimensions in order to mirror the agential pursuit of *Omran*, *Tazkiyah* and *Tawhid*. Moreover, given the relational configuration between the three pillars of the mission of *Estekhlaf* as articulated in section one, the conceptualization of structure should also feature relationships between the material, inter-subjective and relational dimensions in order to capture this relational configuration among the pillars of *Estekhlaf*.

In Western IR and social theory different conceptualizations of structure are usually debated within two deeper debates: one concerns the content of structure (Materialism-Idealism), and the other concerns the relationship between structures and agents (Holism-Individualism).<sup>33</sup> In reality the two issues cannot be studied apart since materialists usually favor causal effects on behavior and thus implies a position on the holism-individualism debate that is more in line with

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<sup>33</sup> Douglas Porpora, “Four Concepts of Social Structure” in Margaret Archer, Roy Bhaskar, Andrew Collier, Tony Lawson and Alan Norrie, eds., *Critical Realism: Essential Readings*, (New York: Routledge, 1998) P. 349.

individualism, while idealists favour constitutive effects, in turn, leaning towards holist solutions that focus on culture and its constitutive effects on agents' identity. With this in mind, and according to Douglas Porpora social structure refers to one of the following: first, patterns of aggregate behavior that are stable overtime. Second, law like regularities that govern the behavior of social facts. Third, systems of human relationships among social positions. And fourth, collective rules and resources that structure behavior.<sup>34</sup> In terms of content, it is evident that different understandings of social structures usually favour one type of content over another. For example, the third conception, usually associated with Marxist principles, favouring relationships, which are absent from the fourth conception, associated with Anthony Giddens, focusing instead on, mainly, rules and actors' realization of which. While the contrast between the first and second conceptions of structure better captures different positions on the holist-individualist spectrum, where agents are almost absent in the second in favour of social facts and law like regularities that govern their behavior, while structure is reduced to individuals' repeated behavior.<sup>35</sup>

Clearly none of these conceptions of structure fit the demanding task of giving a structural expression to the mission of *Estekhlaf*. Fortunately, however, a conceptualization that meets the mentioned criteria has been introduced, again, by Colin Wight who represented the relationships of Roy Bhaskar's four planes of social activity as a proposal for conceptualizing structures.<sup>36</sup>

Bhaskar's four planes of social activity are:

- 1-material transactions with nature (resources, physical attributes, etc.);
- 2- inter-intra-subjective actions (rules, norms, beliefs, institutions, etc.);

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<sup>34</sup> Porpora, Four Concepts of Social Structure, P. 339.

<sup>35</sup> Randall Collins, "On the Microfoundations of Macrosociology", American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 86 (1981): 984-1014.

<sup>36</sup> Wight, Politics as Ontology, p.174

3- Social relations (class, identity, production, etc.);

4- Subjectivity of the agent (subjectivity, identity<sup>37</sup>).

According to Bhaskar, social life occurs on a terrain constituted by those four independent dimensions or planes of activity, yet, those planes of social activity all intersect and are subject to multiple determinations.<sup>38</sup> Wight rightly believes that it is unnecessary to privilege one plane of activity over another since the impact of differing planes of activity on social outcomes might vary across time and space. Accordingly, he proposes a relational view of structure as linking together the various planes of social activity. He elaborates further that, "...brute material facts, the distribution of capabilities, for example, are not a structure but one element in a social field of activity that is structured. As structured it stands in a relation to the ideas held by agents about such a distribution as well as the relationship between the agents engaging in the activity".<sup>39</sup>

Before moving to examining how this critical realist conceptualization of structure can give an expression to the context of the three pillars of the mission of *Estekhlaf*, an argument should be made to sideline the fourth plane of social activity that is "subjectivity of the agent" for now. This argument is based on two concerns, one ethical and one analytical; the ethical concern is that human agency deserves more than a label of "plane of social activity". A more dignified expression for an Islamic view would be: "subjectivity and three planes of social activity". The analytical concern had to do with anticipating the situation in the next section where there will be a clear need for preserving human agency as pre-constituted and endowed with the role of *Khalifah* before embodying social roles.

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<sup>37</sup> For some reason, Wight includes "identity" at the third and fourth planes which could be understood to be in line with his multi-layered notion of agency.

<sup>38</sup> Wight, *politics as Ontology*, p.174

<sup>39</sup> Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p.175

That said, one can clearly find an expression of every pillar of the mission of *Estekhlaf* in Bhaskar's other three planes of social activity, and even the necessary space to link them together in Wight's proposal for structural conceptualization as relationships between those planes of social activity. *Tawhid* was introduced in section one as a relationship between the human agent and *Allah* (SWT). This relationship however can only be expressed and tested through embedment in relations with others, who "compete" for the direction of intentionality and needs of the Islamic agent since fear, love, hope and other needs are always present and satisfied through relationships. As will become clearer in the next section, Baskhar's plane of social relations is defined by relations between social roles filled and embodied by human agents. This, in turn, will be demonstrated as opening a space for expressing *Tawhid*, through awareness of the role of *Khalifah* versus worldly social roles like "statesman", "IR researcher", etc. To recall, *Tawhid*, involves directing intentional actions towards *Allah* (SWT). Thus *Tawhid* in the social world cannot be captured or theorized unless a relational dimension of a concept of structure exists.

Along the same lines, *Tazkiyah* can be captured through the ideational/inter-subjective plane of social activity (rules, norms, beliefs, institutions, etc.). *Tazkiyah* is about following given guidelines for self and collective purification, it is subsequent to *Tawhid*, if one believes in *Allah* (SWT) as the most knowledgeable and wise, then it follows that it is His guidelines that are to be followed. Those guidelines are not unlike rules, norms, and ideas that underline modern social arrangements, only that they are ordained by God. The inter-subjective plane of social activity is where Islamic rules and guidelines compete with man-made moral and cultural guidelines, which makes it a necessary dimension in re-describing the Islamic agents' experience according to the

ontology of *Estekhlaf. Omran*, or material development is also provided a space in Bhaskar's plane of social activity of material transaction with nature.

Moreover, Wight's conceptualization of structure as relations between the various planes of social activity is equally important in expressing the hierarchal relationships between the pillars of the mission of *Estekhlaf*. In this light, when a Muslim theorist works with a social arrangement to capture and then re-describe the embedded side of Islamic agents according to the Islamic ontology of *Estekhlaf*, his job becomes more than examining the substance and content of those planes of social activity in light of *Tawhid*, *Tazkiyah*, and *Omran*. It also involves assessing the structural configurations that underline social and institutional arrangements according to the hierarchal relationship between those pillars, and then points out the tension between the two. It could be the case in a given social arrangement that the material plane of social activity is the one plane that conditions social relations and shared culture, as with capitalism, for example.

If we are not born with a sign on our forehead that reads "a Khalifah of Allah (SWT)", neither there a sign on earth that reads "a field of *Estekhlaf*". Just like the role of *Khalifah*, we get to learn about the nature of our context of embedment as a field of *Estekhlaf* though socialization with man-made social/institutional arrangements that have been evolving or designed with different attitudes towards the relationship of authorization and accountability before *Allah* (SWT). It could well be that the relational plane of a given social/institutional arrangement does not feature *Tawhid*, the inter-subjective plane does not feature God-ordained guidelines and moral assessment for purification, and subsequently its material dimension does not feature *Omran*. A human agent, a *Khalifah*, could well be "placed" in such a man-made social/institutional arrangement that occupies a certain space of the field of *Estekhlaf*. Another

possibility is “placement” in a man-made social/institutional arrangement that acknowledges endowment and hence accountability before *Allah* (SWT). Yet, from an Islamic perspective, the ontological fact remains that human agency is always embedded and endowed. Thus, from an Islamic ontological perspective agency always features: endowment, embedment, and intentional action. The conceptualization of structure according to Wight’s relations of planes of social activity is indeed helpful in attaching embedment next to endowment in the Islamic view of agency since it allows a complementary relationship between the purpose of endowment and the worldly “tools” needed to realize this purpose through the context of embedment. At this stage, sections one and two, have specified the essential nature and properties of both human agency and earth according to their position in the superstructure of *Estekhlaf*, where the former is constituted with the basic role of *Khalifah* and is ready for operationalization in the social world through conceptualization of agential capacities as endowed, embedded, and intentional action, while the latter is constituted as a field of *Estekhlaf*, ready to host different man-made social arrangements as an underlying landscape featuring material, inter-subjective, and relational planes of social activity. The next step is to look for an agent-structure solution that can capture the relationship of embedment and that “fits” in the overall superstructure of *Estekhlaf*.

***From Embedment to Embodiment: The Khalifah “in Action”:***

Although usually pointing towards structural context, embedment was introduced above as a dimension of agency. This is necessary to preserve the social dimension of the Islamic view of agency. The inclusion of embedment as a dimension of agency can only mean that such an account of agency cannot be expressed unless important decisions regarding the relationship between the endowed aspect of agency, and the embedded aspect have already been made. This, further, means that some criteria and assumptions about an agent-structure relationship has to be

in place in order to express the elements of this account of agency in a coherent and sensible way. The spectrum of possibilities for agent-structure solutions is rather wide in western social and IR theory. It encompasses solutions that range from excessive individualism to extreme structuralism/holism and some solutions in between that attempt to find a middle ground. Here, patience with constructing an Islamic ontology based on *Estekhlaf* where the nature and properties of both agency and structure have been outlined should pay off. Through the superstructure of *Estekhlaf* and the subsequent specifications of properties of both agency and the context of embedment we now have ontological criteria for “placing” an Islamic view of agent-structure relationship on this spectrum.

To put these criteria into practice, if we chose to express Islamic view of agency through individualist solutions that ignore the independent reality of structures, and their causal effects on outcomes, and instead claim reality and causality for individuals and their actions then we can preserve endowment, and with it freedom of subjectivity, intentionality and sense of accountability, but lose embedment. This is in line with understanding structure as nothing more than the aggregate behavior of individual mentioned above. Basically, omitting the phrase “on earth” from the Quranic verse, or at least its implications for social outcomes, subsequently risking losing the social dimension of the *Khalifah*. This is a classical problem associated with the sort of Islamic efforts that do not take adequate account of structural effects on agential actions as mentioned in chapter one.

Alternatively, if we chose to emphasize structural causal and constitutive powers, but without intentional action, then we preserve embedment but lose intentionality, freedom of subjectivity, and most likely a sense of accountability. We simply lose agential capacities that can sustain awareness of endowment. Equally important, we lose agential awareness of the fact that man-

made arrangements are constructed on an already constituted field of *Estekhlaf*. In other words, agency loses its “sense of place” and with it the role of *Khalifah*. If we move back to the middle in order to find more balanced solutions we are faced with a number of solutions that can usually be found under the label of “structurationism” that attempt to do justice to both agents and structures. In most cases, they end up with conflation and confusion of properties and nature of agency and structures, and subsequently a confusion between agential actions and structural effects.<sup>40</sup>

To better express the Islamic view of agency as endowed, embedded, intentional action, what is needed is an agent-structure solution that can preserve agential awareness of the role of *Khalifah*, and at the same time insist on its actualization and socialization under man-made social arrangements. Fortunately, there is such a framework, or agent-structure solution, that could allow the relationship of embedment to fit in the superstructure of *Estekhlaf*. That is Bhaskar’s Transformational Model of Social Action (TMSA). This model, I believe, satisfies the requirements of representing the elements of agency as embedded, intentional action, and offers a landscape where these elements can be attached to endowment. Bhaskar summarizes his model as follows, “people do not create society, for it always pre-exists them and is a necessary condition of their activity. Rather, society must be regarded as an ensemble of structures, practices, and conventions, which individuals produce or transform, but which would not exist unless they did so. Society does not exist independently of human activity (the error of reification). But it is not the product of it (the error of voluntarism)”.<sup>41</sup> The advantages of Bhaskar’s model to the purpose of this chapter should be clear; first, is the distinction between agents, people, or individuals, on the one hand; and society, social arrangements or social forms

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<sup>40</sup> Roy Bhaskar, ‘Possibility of Naturalism’ (London: Routledge,1979) p.32

<sup>41</sup> Bhaskar, Possibility of Naturalism,p.36



on the other, and the subsequent preservation of the properties and nature of each. This distinction, in turn, allows a clear application of the Islamic view of agency which describes distinct properties of human agency separable from those of the context of embedment. Second, his departure from the dominant views that see structural effects only in a constraining way is useful to better express the Islamic view that stresses the harmonious relationship between the human agent as *Khalifah* and earth as a field of *Estekhlaf*. He makes this point by stating that, “real subjectivity requires conditions, resources, and media, for the creative subject to act”.<sup>42</sup> This is not really different from the principle that a *Khalifah* requires the conditions of production to realize *Tawhid*, *Tazkiyah* and *Omran*.

Note here that his use of terms like “intentional” and “creative” to describe agential action acknowledges the presence of a dimension of social embedment in every human action. What allows Bhaskar to capture the property of agential intentionality, is his ability to spot what he calls an “ontological hiatus” between structure and agents, that could be thought of as a providing a “break” or a moment of reflexivity that according to him should be featured in any mode of connection (viz. transformation) which other models typically ignore.<sup>43</sup> Bhaskar is right that other models do not offer generous time and space for agential action to demonstrate much intentionality and creativity. Structural solutions, in particular, are the least generous in this regard; terms like reproduction, and even “transformation” are usually rushed over in favor of terms like “constitution” and “causality” that typically point towards structures not agents, let alone intentional, creative agents. Bhaskar’s ontological hiatus, however, suggests that “much is going on” not only in “transformations” but also *during* “reproduction”. It is this ontological

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<sup>42</sup> Bhaskar, Possibility of Naturalism, p.36

<sup>43</sup> Bhaskar, Possibility of Naturalism, p.36

hiatus that an Islamic view of agency requires in order to give agency the needed time and space to escape immediate worldly structures and reflect on the role of *Khalifah*.

Although Bhaskar's transformational model of social activity provides generous space and time for intentional agential action, it does need qualification in order to carry the burden of holding a high level of agential awareness and capacity for totalizing one's context of embedment as one element in the superstructure of *Estekhlaf* and subsequently awareness of one's role as *Khalifah* of *Allah* (SWT) on earth. To avoid any conflation of the properties and nature of agents and structures, Bhaskar, unnecessarily, downplays the level of awareness of agents, by proposing, that, "...people, in their conscious activity, for the most part, unconsciously reproduce (and occasionally transform) the structures governing their substantive activities of production. Thus people do not marry to reproduce the nuclear family or work to sustain the capitalist economy".<sup>44</sup> Here is a clear limitation on agential awareness that is rather badly needed to express the Islamic view of agency. The point is that the limitation does not seem to be necessary, since such a distinction could have been demonstrated through a discussion of the "range of praxis" or action, which was coined by Bhaskar himself.<sup>45</sup> Such a discussion could have also, naturally, touched upon issues and problems of collective actions and possibilities of structural transformation, while leaving individual "intentionality" and level of awareness untouched. This is a safer way to draw this distinction at least from an Islamic perspective. To recall, the prophet Mohammad (PBUH) acknowledges constraints on action and speech but not the heart, where freedom of subjectivity and intentionality make their presence. So it could be understood that one "cannot do much" to transform the capitalist economy, but there is no reason why one should expect a level of agential awareness that cannot capture its "evil" aspects, at least in his "heart". Yet,

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<sup>44</sup> Bhaskar, *Possibility of Naturalism*, p.35

<sup>45</sup> See Roy Bhaskar "A Realist Theory of Science" (London, Verso, 1975)

remember, that the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) called this high level of awareness the weakest form of faith, a stronger form of faith is for one to act on his/her range of praxis, yet with a structural awareness. So, many Muslims choose Islamic banking over conventional banking to advance the Islamic economy, and marry to help reproduce the nuclear family as a “pure” and responsible way of association between men and women. Although perfectly knowing that the range of their praxis or action is limited, they nevertheless act with structural awareness or with the intentionality of structural transformation/reproduction.

In this regard, Bhaskar’s model has clear generational quality that necessarily complements the (transformation/reproduction) qualities that he chose to “hide” from human agents’ awareness within the model. This is not the case in the Islamic view of human actions; the following, perhaps unpleasant, example from the Quran teaches Islamic agents about the transformative/reproduction quality of human praxis: *“He will say: ‘Enter ye in the company of the people who passed away before you-humankind and jinn’s- into the fire’ Every time a new people enters, it curses its sister people (the one that went before) until they follow each other all into fire. Saith the last about the first ‘Our lord, it is these that misled us: so give them a double penalty in the fire.’ He will say: ‘for each one there is double (penalty), but ye know not’*.<sup>46</sup> With this “sad” conversation in mind, especially the phrase, “it is these that misled us”, it is hard to sustain an Islamic view of human action that does not take into account agents’ awareness of the structural implications of their activities. Of course, in the final instance, the level of awareness displayed by human agents varies, but so does the level of rationality as articulated by Weber for example, yet, that does not stop him from using an ideal-type model of rationality. Likewise,

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<sup>46</sup> Quran (7:37)

there is no reason why an Islamic view of agency should not be based on an ideal-type model of agential awareness.

With this qualification in mind, Bhaskar's transformational model of social activity is ready for hosting an Islamic view of agency as endowed, embedded, intentional action. The starting point for this exercise could be captured through Bhaskar's notion of "position-practice system" as mediating between human agents and social structures. In his words:

[T]hese are, points of contact, or 'slots' in the social structure into which active subjects must slip in order to reproduce it...such a point linking action and structure must both endure and be immediately occupied by individuals. It's clear that the mediating system we need is that of the positions (places, functions, rules, tasks, duties, rights, etc.) occupied (filled, assumed, enacted, etc.) by individuals, and of the practices (activities, etc.) in which, in virtue of their occupancy of these positions (and vice versa), they engage...now such positions and practices, if they are to be individualized at all, can only be done so relationally.<sup>47</sup>

The key term in this proposal of agent-structure connection is "occupied" and its derivatives: "filled", "assumed" and "enacted". This explains why Wight uses the term "embodied" to refer to the social dimension of his own notion of agency, which depends on Bhaskar's social ontology. Conversely, the social dimension of agency according to an Islamic view as developed so far in this chapter used the term "embedded". This was for the sake of stressing the point of the totalization of earth as a field of *Estekhlaf* and to highlight the relationship between this field of *Estekhlaf* and human agency as one of two elements in the superstructure of *Estekhlaf*. Once this image of the superstructure of *Estekhlaf* is in place, "zooming in" to capture the dynamics of this relationship is better served by use of the term "embodied". Thus, at this stage a change of Islamic view of agency from endowed, *embedded*, intentional action to endowed, *embodied*,

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<sup>47</sup> Bhaskar, Possibility of Naturalism, p. 40

intentional action is fruitful as it ensures a smooth application of the role of *Khalifah* to the worldly social roles that in Bhaskar's model are presented as "structural slots".

The major analytical move in this chapter, and one that will prove essential in the coming chapters, is the exploitation of Bhaskar's articulation of social roles as "structural slots", where human agency, with an awareness of endowment, "slips into" or is granted access to man-made social arrangements through filling or embodying social roles. It is only through this articulation that we can speak of a "Khalifah" and "IR researcher", a "Khalifah and a "statesman", etc. in effect bringing together endowment and embedment, or the spiritual and the social in one coherent account of linking roles.

To recap, Bhaskar's social terrain included four planes (material, inter-subjective, relational, and subjectivity). His position-practice system, points of contact, or structural slots, which according to him "must be done relationally" comfortably falls onto the third plane of social relations. Since the relational plane of social activity hosts the points of contact between agents and structures, then, logically, it is the plane through which agents are granted access to the resources and constraints of the other planes, namely, the material and the ideational/inter-subjective. This suggests that the starting point for an agent connection with social structure is through occupancy or embodiment with social roles that are relationally structured. Recall also that in the discussion on the four planes of social activity above, a plea was made to set aside subjectivity as a "plane of social activity". As mentioned before, this plea was based on two concerns, one ethical and one analytical; the ethical concern is that human agency deserves more than a label of "plane of social activity". A more dignified expression for an Islamic view would be: "subjectivity and three planes of social activity". The analytical concern had to do with anticipating the current situation of the need for preserving human agency as pre-constituted and endowed with the role

of *Khalifah* that “occupies”, “fills” or “embodies” relationally structured social roles, or point of contact, that gives them access to the inter-subjective and material conditions of productions, which they in turn utilize using their endowed capacities of intentionality and action to perform the mission of *Estekhlaf*.

A rather interesting example by Wight of Mr. Blair’s relational context, can clarify how the strategy of linking the role of *Khalifah* to worldly social roles can give coherence to the Islamic account of agency. Wight draws a brief sketch of Tony Blair’s placement in the social field as follows: “...Tony Blair, for example, may relate to: (1) his local shopkeeper as a consumer; (2) the cabinet as political leader; (3) the leader of the opposition as ideological and political opponent; (4) ethnic minorities in Britain as political leader from within an overlapping cultural system; and (5) his wife as an economic provider (perhaps) and husband”. He elaborates, “...for on the multi-layered account developed here, Mr. Blair never appears as a coherent, singular, unified agent with easily identifiable goals, but instead is driven through multiple social complexes”<sup>48</sup>.

Although the Islamic view of agency developed in this chapter shares a great deal with, and even builds on, Wight’s notions of agency, the aim at this conjecture is to avoid this conclusion. Instead, the Islamic flavour or application of this notion of agency aims at an account of agency that *always* appears as a coherent, singular, unified agent with easily identifiable goals despite placement in multiple social complexes. This is what attachment of endowment to embedment should achieve, or in other words, the attachment of the role of *Khalifah* to other socially and relationally positioned roles like consumer, political leader and husband should achieve. The Islamic framework of agency is one that positions roles in the context of embedment in the role

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<sup>48</sup> Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p.219

of *Khalifah*, in order to bring in the consumer, the political leader, and the husband, as social roles, under the superstructure of *Estekhlaf*. The important point to make is that, just like in the example above, those roles do not refer to different agents but are different social roles “filled” by the same human agent who is aware of his/her role as *Khalifah* while “moving” from one to another relationally positioned “worldly” social roles. As a human agent who is aware of his endowed role as *Khalifah*, an individual moves through different social arrangements occupying and embodying different social roles, each giving him/her access to specific rules, meanings, and norms of interaction, and access to material conditions of production. From an Islamic view, what gives human agency its coherence is the capacity to take on the role of *Khalifah* to underlie each and every embodied role. The Islamic view of agency then insists that an individual in all these relations is a *Khalifah* and consumer when he interacts with his local shopkeeper, a *Khalifah* and a political leader when interacting with the cabinet, and a *Khalifah* and husband when interacting with his wife. One could argue that this would make “life easier” for Mr. Blair; having one overarching direction of accountability through *Tawhid*, and one set of moral guidelines of *Tazkiyah* to underline, and assess, specific rules of different social arrangements. Leaving Mr. Blair alone for now and recalling instead “our friend from chapter two” who keeps moving between his prayer rug and his desk five times a day, one could imagine the ontological hiatus in Bhaskar’s model as the space between the prayer rug and the research desk. Such space allows the Islamic agent who chooses to embody or occupy the worldly social role of IR researcher to bring in his awareness of his role as *Khalifah* to the research desk, and direct his intentional action of “seeking knowledge” accordingly.

This brings to mind an issue of conflicting identities and how this conflict can be resolved. Social theorists usually solve this conflict through the realization that most identities are

activated selectively depending on the situations in which we find ourselves.<sup>49</sup> And also through arguing that identities are arrayed hierarchically according to an actor's degree of commitment to them: some fundamental to our self-concept, others more superficial.<sup>50</sup> As beneficial as these arguments are for the purpose of this discussion, the way the Islamic identity, a faith based identity, is presented through the role of *Khalifah* where other social roles and involvement in different social arrangements supervene suggests that Islamic identity is not meant to "compete" with other social identities and their sources like race, nationality, profession, etc. Instead an Islamic identity, as presented in this chapter, is meant to compete with the more basic identity of "modern individual" and how each directs agential actions differently as will be demonstrated in chapter five. In this light, Islamic identity is meant to be an arbiter, not a competitor, to different social roles and identities.

### ***Conclusion:***

This chapter introduced a view of Islamic agency within the wider ontology of *Estekhlaaf*. The advantage of this approach was to avoid an immediate placement of Islamic agency within western IR theoretical frameworks, which is unlikely to lead to interesting findings given the structural tendencies of these frameworks and the subsequent assumption of agential "sameness". Instead, the chapter endeavored to place social arrangements that western IR theory tries to capture within an Islamic ontology. This in turn allows the thesis to proceed in the direction of re-describing the beliefs and concepts of Islamic agents about their context of embedment according to an Islamic belief system, and in the process, re-describing the structures of

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<sup>49</sup> Alexander, C. Norman and Mary Glenn Wiley, "Situated Activity and Identity Formation", in M. Rosenberg and R. Turner, eds., *Social Psychology*, (New York, Basic Books, 1981) pp. 269-289.

<sup>50</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p.231.



contemporary international relations according to Islamic ontology, most importantly, the nature and properties of both agency and structures.

Accordingly, the superstructure of *Estekhlaf* was proposed as such an ontology where human agency and structure were endowed/constituted with their very basic nature and properties, the former as a *Khalifah*, or vice-regent of *Allah* (SWT), and the latter as man-made arrangements hosted on the field of *Estekhlaf*. To move the discussion from the highly ontological and abstract terms to the theoretical and substantive level, freedom of subjectivity, intentionality, accountability and action, were claimed as necessary elements for the *Khalifah* to perform the endowed mission of *Estekhlaf* (*Tawhid*, *Tazkiyah*, and *Omran*). Material, ideational/inter-subjective, and relational planes of social activity were claimed for the field of *Estekhlaf* as a landscape where man-made social arrangements take place. Within this context, an operationalizable equation of the *Khalifah* as “endowed, embodied, intentional action” was proposed. Bhaskar’s transformational model of social activity was then utilized to give dynamics to this equation through a strategy of linking roles, the endowed role of the *Khalifah* with the embodied, worldly social roles such as “statesman”, “IR researcher”, etc. as a point of contact with man-made social arrangements. This produces a conceptualization of Islamic agency able to encompass socialization through man-made social structures embodying roles, yet, which enjoys an “ontological hiatus” where freedom of subjectivity, intentionality, and accountability before *Allah* (SWT) can make their presence felt when performing a social role and, by extension, affecting through socialization wider social arrangements.

The role of *Khalifah* was introduced in this chapter, however, as a human role that can best be attached to individual roles. Yet, contemporary international relations as macro arrangements only grant access to its planes of social activity through social roles embodied by collective or

corporate “agents”. This suggests that applying the strategy of linking roles seems to need an assessment of the possibility of bridging a micro-macro distance, or in other words, an assessment of the possibility of taking the role of *Khalifah* to the collective and corporate level in order to be granted access to the macro social arrangements of international relations. This will need a discussion of Islamic views on collective and corporate agency as much as a discussion of the assumptions of western IR theory on human agency.

**Chapter Four**  
***“States do not go to Heaven”: Locating the Khalifah at the state level***

The proposed Islamic account of agency developed in chapter three is clearly based on human qualities and is best applied to individual human agents. Taking this account to capture Islamic agency in contemporary international relations needs an effort of bridging some ontological distance in order for the *Khalifah* to make contact with the macro social arrangement of international relations. As will be demonstrated later in this thesis the movement across this macro-micro ontological distance will require a two way effort: one Islamic, from the individual to the collective/corporate; and the other is western, from macro-social arrangements to micro-meanings of human nature, purpose, and needs. The latter however, will be dealt with in chapter five, for now, the task is to move the Islamic view of agency beyond the individual level without loss of ontological properties and moral responsibility. With this in mind, the chapter will defend human agency as the moral referent point for Islamic action in international relations while acknowledging the causal sources inscribed in the state.

Moral responsibility is concerned with the capacity of “being answerable” for a particular act or outcome in accordance with what are understood to be moral imperatives, whether in the form of duty/obligation, or blame/accountability. Such statements of responsibility must be directed towards those entities capable of responding to ethical imperatives.<sup>1</sup> Causal responsibility, on the other hand, focuses on how a particular outcome is generated and need not be tied to purposive

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<sup>1</sup> Toni Erskine ‘Locating Responsibility: The problem of Moral Agency in International Relations’ in Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal ‘Oxford Hand Book of International Relations’, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008) p. 700.

action.<sup>2</sup> The focus on “how an outcome is generated” usually brings to mind some sort of causal mechanisms linking and utilizing resources whether material or ideational. These, as were demonstrated in chapter three, are accessed and utilized by human agents through embodying social roles. In contemporary social arrangements embodiment in institutions like states, multi-national corporations, banks, etc. is what gives human agents within such institutions causal powers not available to others outside such institutions. In this light, institutions facilitate and direct power and can be causally responsible for generating an outcome. This does not mean that they should represent moral referent points or can be held morally responsible for an outcome. In western International Theory, however, corporate responsibility, detached from human agency, remains the sole target for explanation. Accordingly, institutions, namely states, are the primary agents in mainstream western IR theory.

Despite the increasing normative richness in the conceptualization of structures in international relations, the agential side has not received the correspondent dose of moral awareness; from Waltz’s material structure, to Wendt’s three cultures of anarchy, and now Buzan’s institutions of modern international society that include human rights, equality, market economy, etc. agency has not witnessed much improvement in its capacity for “ethical reasoning” under such normative structures. Nevertheless, efforts to “moralize” agents in international relations have taken two different directions, the first is to force “moral agency” on states and international organizations and their corporate nature, while the second is to bring back in human agency as the only “real” moral agents in the social world.<sup>3</sup> Since the Islamic view of agency insists that moral responsibility is essentially a property of human agency as the only “entities” answerable

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<sup>2</sup> Erskine, ‘Locating Responsibility’, p.700

<sup>3</sup> The first direction can be spotted in works by English School theorist like Christian Reus-Smit, Toni Erskine, and to some extent Barry Buzan while the second direction is taken by Critical Realists like Colin Wight, who through emphasizing human agency at least implicitly open space for moral responsibility.

to *Allah* (SWT) in a context of *Estekhlaf* it is expected that this chapter will take the second direction. The aim then is to take *Estekhlaf* to the state level, not to allocate *Estekhlaf* to the state.

This will require a critique of two deeply internalized assumptions in western IR theory first, is the personification of the state and the resultant omission of human agency within, and second, the instrumental treatment of state-society relations and the resultant omission of role of society in constituting the identity and moral purpose of the state. It is through proposing Islamic counter-positions on these issues that stretching the Islamic account of agency to cover agential levels from the individual to the corporate can be possible. To this end the chapter will propose three sources of agency that together give a multilayered account of agency, namely: ideational resources of the Muslim society; the institutional state; and, human agency embedded within the structures of the institutional state.

The first section will set the normative and ontological ground by introducing Islamic principles on collective action and corporate responsibility. The section will defend the view that collective action in Islam is encouraged and even necessary, yet, it is one that is based on emotional bonds between members of society and a collective expression of their collective morals rather than merely a technical solution to solve cooperation problems. A subsequent argument is that corporate entities and institutions cannot replace human agency at the state level.

The second section will introduce Mustapha Manjoud's framework of political *Estekhlaf*, which is based on the general ontology of *Estekhlaf* that gives the relationship of authorization and accountability a political expression, by extending this relationship between the Muslim society and its political leadership in an overall framework that includes society within its reference. Illumination of the conceptual credentials of this framework to express Islamic agency in

international relations will be done through engagement with Alexander Wendt's notions of state agency in his *Social Theory of International Politics*. The discussion will result in the realization that while Manjoud's political *Estekhlaf* offers generous space for society and human agency, it does not present a conceptual space of an independent political organization or what can be called the institutional state, and hence offers limited potential for agency. This will be demonstrated to be a mirror image of Wendt's treatment that emphasizes the institutional state, or the state per se, as he calls it,<sup>4</sup> while leaving out both society and its ideational resources for state identity, and human agency within the state structure as "owners" of intentionality. Having specified the necessary conceptual additions to Manjoud's framework of political *Estekhlaf* in order to better express Islamic agency; mainly the need for a separate conceptual space for the institutions of the state that do not replace human agents but give them an organizational platform to facilitate their action; section three will start by proposing Colin Wight's notion of the state with inscribed powers within its structure that facilitate the actions of human agents within<sup>5</sup> as an appropriate conceptual space that can complement Manjoud's framework. The chapter will arrive at an overall framework that satisfies the need for the three sources of agency mentioned above and given coherence by the political structure of *Estekhlaf*.

To give this multilayered and multi-leveled account of agency methodological coherence and better prepare it for linkage and operationalization with concepts of structures in Western IR theory, the section will conclude with a discussion of the levels of analysis and propose a version where the account of Islamic agency can be better mapped.

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). P.197.

<sup>5</sup> Colin Wight, *Agents, Structures, and International Relations: Politics as Ontology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p. 220

### ***Collective Action in Islam... “Oh, You Who Believe”***

The phrase “*Oh, you who believe...*” or in Arabic “*Ya Ayyoha Allahtheen Amano...*” appears on almost every page of the Quran. An important distinction between the Arabic and English language should be made here; In English, “you” is used to address both an individual and a group, while in Arabic, the grammar and shape of the sentence changes from addressing an individual to addressing a group, taking the phrase above as an example, to address an individual, the “n” at the end of the word “*Allatheen*” and the “o” at the end of the word “*Amano*” should be taken away. Their presence points to the fact that *Allah* (SWT) addresses Muslims as a group. Likewise, the most popular and used prayers and supplications made by Muslims to *Allah* (SWT) come in plural form, that is, although a Muslim might be praying alone in his bedroom at night, he still uses phrases like “guide us”, “forgive us”, “mercy us”, instead of “guide me”, “forgive me”, and “mercy me”. So just as *Allah* (SWT) addresses Muslims as a group, when Muslims pray to *Allah* (SWT), they do it with a sense of a group.

This sense of collectivity transcends spiritual interaction with *Allah* (SWT) to the everyday processes and operations in the social world; the phrase “*Oh you who believe...*” (in the plural) is usually followed by an order that is not restricted to spiritual development but also obligates Muslims to act in certain ways whether among themselves or towards others which basically assigns collective obligations to Muslims. Collective obligations, in turn, must assume collective action. To put it differently, it could be argued that Muslims involve themselves in collective action to satisfy an obligation from *Allah* (SWT) that otherwise cannot be satisfied through the sum of individual actions of Muslims. Encouragement for collective action in Islam is straightforward and unproblematic, what needs more attention is the dynamics, solutions and ultimate ends for such action. Contemporary western collective action theories usually state the

problem as one of creating the conditions for cooperation among self-interested rational individuals who are “teased” by the possibility of “free-riding”.<sup>6</sup> Once the “free-riding” problem is overcome, in rationalist terms, then the collective action problem is solved and cooperation starts to be “taken for granted” as the ethics of cooperation become more deeply internalized by individual members of the group or society. Islam, conversely, and most religious traditions in this respect, usually utilize the emotional capacities of individuals to extend bonds among members of the group that conditions rationalist calculations in the first place. Islamic traditions and sources are clear about this; the following sayings of the prophet Mohammad (PBUH) are good examples: “The like of the believers in their love, sympathy, and mercy to one another is the like of one body, if one organ is ill, the whole body becomes sleepless and feverous”.<sup>7</sup> The prophet Mohammad (PBUH) also said “None of you (truly) believes, until he wishes for his (Muslim) brother, what he wishes for himself”.<sup>8</sup> Such emotional/normative basis for collective action is not popular in analyzing collective action in modern discourse. Yet, transcendental notions of social bonds do appear occasionally in secular/modern analysis; a good example is Edward Shils’s view of society and social relations, which Joel Migdal presents as follows:

He grasped the elusive point that societies are not, and cannot be bound only through material and instrumental relations. People’s connection to one another rests just as fundamentally on a transcendental notion: They seek and create powerful common understandings or meaning in their relationship, forming a strong relational glue that binds them together... community is not just a group of concrete and particular persons, it is, more fundamentally, a group of persons acquiring their significance by their embodiment of values, which transcend them and by their conformity with standards and rules from which they derive their dignity.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Pierre Hamel, Henri Lustiger-Thaler, Louis Maheu, ‘Late Modern Institutions and Collective Action’, *The International Handbook of Sociology*, (SAGE Publications, 2000)

<sup>7</sup> Narrated by Muslim, *Al-Masnad Al-Sahih*, [The Right Reference], (Cairo: Dar Ehya’ Al-Kotob Al-Arabiyyah, 1955) No. 2586/9.

<sup>8</sup> Narrated by Mohammad Bin Ismail Al-Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Imam Al-Bukhari*, (Riyadh: Dar Al-Rushd, 2006)

<sup>9</sup> Joel Migdal, ‘State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another’ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) p. 7.



Migdal elaborates on Shil's views by emphasizing that social sciences have long ignored these affective and emotional factors in social relations. If this is the case, then the discipline of international relations, maybe after Economics, is one of the least embarrassed social sciences about this guilt. To be sure there are two important elements of social bonds in Shil's view, one emotional and one normative, both give members of society a sense of collectivity. These two elements rarely, if ever, appear in agential accounts within western IR theory; the structural realist image of the state as a unitary actor/agent simply ignores whatever goes on in the level of social relations or ideational resources of society; while the pluralist image offers an instrumental reading of the operations and processes at the level of society and by extension state-society relationships. Within the latter, the state appears as an instrumental solution to collective action problems among societal actors with diverse interests, while the former sacrifices whatever goes in "within the state" to maintain the more manageable "reason of the state". In both cases the "standards and rules from which members of society derive their dignity" let alone the emotional bonds that connect them do not make it to the identity of the state at the international level. The point is that having articulated collective action as, mainly, a problem of cooperation among self-interested rational actors at the domestic level, western IR theory and social theory in general is set on a path dependency where interaction in higher social arrangements is viewed through instrumental/rational lenses. In this reading, both the pluralist image and unitary image of the state provide no space for normative/emotional bonds. The primacy of rational choice theory in western IR theory is a testimony to this narrow dependency path that runs from relationships among individuals in groups to states in the international system.

The Islamic view of collective action, however, seems to establish a normative and emotional base, upon which the more technical issues of collective action like institutionalization,

centralization and authorization are built. In this light, internalization of the ethics of cooperation in Islam precedes and conditions rational calculations, while in modern western thought, rational calculations might lead to internalization of ethics of cooperation. Islamic collective action can be thought of as featuring a different “sequencing”; where the reflectivist/normative moment precedes and conditions the rationalist/strategic moment creating what can be described as “bounded rationality”<sup>10</sup> where strategic interaction takes place and is conditioned by a community environment<sup>11</sup> with its emotional bonds and collective sense of a group. Given this sequence, metaphors like “prisoners dilemma” for example should not be applied to capture interaction among the Muslim group since the reflectivist/normative moment between “the prisoners” is absent.

The emphasis on the emotional/normative base for collective action means that the image of Islamic collectivity might be reassembled in a way where the technicalities of collective action occupy a surface while ideational resources of society occupy the depth of a landscape that hosts institutions. Western IR theory, however, can only “see” the surface. Therefore it only captures institutions separated from their moral purpose. Indeed, institutions are usually viewed as the “end process of collective action”.<sup>12</sup> The result is an artificial creation of independent level of the state and state institutions only linked loosely to collective action and subsequently the ideational resources of society. Once taken as solely technical solutions to collective action, theorists are free to ‘play’ with those institutions, most clearly the state, by assigning them identity and interests independent of their societies; and desires and intentionality independent of the human

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<sup>10</sup> Niilo Kauppi, ‘Rationality, Institutions, and Reflexivity in the EU: Some Ontological and Epistemological Considerations’. (Working Paper, Center for European Political Sociology, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Kauppi ‘Rationality, Institutions, and Reflexivity in the EU’, p.3.

<sup>12</sup> Hamel Pierre, Lustiger-Thaler, and Louis Maheu, ‘Late Modern Institutions and Collective Action.’, in Stella Quah and Arnaud Sales (ed.), *The International Handbook of Sociology*, (London: Sage Publications Limited, 2000) p. 257.

agents within. In other words, according to images of mainstream western IR theory, collective action disappears at national borders and with it identity and culture of national societies.

This takes us to another point concerning the Islamic view of collective action and the possibility to express it through the forest of institutions bordering the national and the international levels. This point, although it has to do with assigning ultimate ends to institutions, is again best captured by the very basic definition of the problem of collective action. Again, having defined such problem with cooperation among self-interested individuals, cooperation itself can be thought of as the ultimate purpose and end of collective action solutions through institutionalization. The Islamic view, however, although it values cooperation as an important target for collective action solutions, only views it as an intermediate aim, a necessary following question will be “cooperate to do what?” or alternatively “work together”, “increase/enhance causal powers” to do what?

The following Quranic verse gives a clear answer” *Cooperate in virtue and righteousness, but do not cooperate in sin and transgression*”.<sup>13</sup> Islam then emphasizes a normative dimension or moral purpose to collective action solutions. Minus this normative dimension, *organized* crimes like drug trade or human trafficking will be approached, at least in theory, just like any other organization or institution. Indeed for human trafficking or drug trade to take shape on a global level, collective action problems, in a technical sense, have been solved among drug dealers or human traffickers, they are able to harmonize their individual interests and cooperate, only though in “sin and transgression”. An Islamic solution to collective action then cannot stop at cooperation through the creation of normatively neutral institutions. In other words, collective action problem is not just a technical problem but also equally a normative one.

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<sup>13</sup> Quran (5:2)

To be sure, Islam does not give detailed know-how for solving collective action problems and institutional design. Instead, as mentioned above, it first insists on the emotional/normative basis for collective action, and second, on the ultimate moral purpose and ends to such action. In between, it is a human collective responsibility to come up with institutional solutions to extend, preserve and reproduce the links between the two. After all, they have been endowed with the necessary properties and capacities to come up with such solutions. What this treatment does is claim collective action for society before moving on to the corporate level of the state. In other words, claiming institutional innovation, and collective moral responsibility for society, allows society to appear, or reappear at the analytical borders of the concept of the state in international relations. Although not as a “taken for granted element” in a fictional rational unitary actor but rather as a guardian and conditioner for the identity and interests of the institutions of the state.

This, in turn, ensures that the state as an institution does not replace collective action at the national/international borders, this would be theoretically appropriate if the ultimate end of the institutions of the state was solving cooperation problems among members of society, but this is only part of the story; the other part has to do with observing “virtue and righteousness”, which is an ongoing practice that requires human agency both at its collective and individual levels. Observing “virtue and righteousness” of any level cannot be satisfied through causal powers, but through intentional action, making the logical question whether we can speak of intentional collective action? This in turn is based on an answer to the question ‘can we speak of collective intentionality?’ John Searle believes that we can.<sup>14</sup> Having defined intentionality as directedness of the mind, he insists that collective intentionality is the basis for collective beliefs and

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<sup>14</sup> John Searle, ‘What is an Institution?’, *Journal of Institutional Economics*, vol. 1, issue.1, (June 2005) p. 7

collective desires and by extension collective action.<sup>15</sup> Back to the way *Allah* (SWT) addresses Muslims as one group, if assigning collective obligations, like observing “virtue and righteousness”, assumes capacity for collective action then it should also assume the capacity for collective directedness of mind towards “virtue and righteousness”.

Intentional collective action as a property of a group or members of society seems normatively encouraged and ontologically accepted from an Islamic perspective as the necessary capacities to direct action towards satisfying the mission of *Estekhlaf* are present. Collective action, however, can only offer limited prospect for agency in terms of intentionality, compared to intentionality of individuals, and also in terms of ‘causal sharpness’ compared to corporate entities like the state. Yet, the level of collective action remains an intermediate level between the level of the individual and the level of corporate agency that is necessary to take into account the ideational resources of society in terms of the ‘values, standards, and rules from which members of society derive their dignity’ and in turn conditions the design and creation of institutions and corporate entities.

In any case, it is not groups or societies that make contact or embody social roles within the macro social arrangements in international relations, at least according to western IR theory. Rather, only states as corporate entities are allowed to fill the structural slots that Bhaskar articulated as such points of contact. To move up from the collective to the corporate level, the ontological popular move to take in western IR theory is to transfer action to the state. That is, to switch from collective action to causal powers, and from collective intentionality to ‘corporate culture’, in short, to assign action and agency to the state. At this level moral responsibility for human agency starts to give away to causal responsibility of corporate agency. That said, one can

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<sup>15</sup> Searle, ‘What is an Institution?’ p.8

still ‘force’ moral responsibility on corporate agency, but can the Islamic view of agency as developed in chapter three tolerate the assignment of moral responsibility to corporate action? Given the criteria introduced in chapter three, namely: endowment, embodiment, and intentional action, the short answer is “no”. Moral responsibility in Islam remains human responsibility. To be sure, since collective action ultimately takes shape through institutionalization, a certain ontological move is required to incorporate corporate level of agency in the Islamic view, yet, certainly it is not the one suggested by mainstream western IR theory above.

A growing literature in Islamic contemporary thought, however, is worth mentioning. This has to do with the increasing ascription of legal personality to Islamic banks and corporations in Islamic economics and finance.<sup>16</sup> The study of Islamic economics and finance is considerably more advanced in developing legal tools to capture Islamic action than its counterparts in other disciplines including international relations. In there, notions of juridical personality can be found referring to Islamic institutions like corporations and banks. There are a number of points however, that make the uncritical borrowing of this practice to an Islamic view of agency in international relations a problematic one: first is that the literature of Islamic economics and finance has a stronger legal flavor than an explanatory one. In this light Islamic corporate entities are ascribed legal/juridical personhood<sup>17</sup>, with less emphasis on debates surrounding the “reality” of corporate intentionality and action, which is what is at stake in ontological debates on states’ agency in western IR theory. In International Relations ascription of legal/juridical personhood

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<sup>16</sup> See, Rashad Khalil, *Business Corporations in Islamic Fiqh*, (Damascus: Dar Al-Rashid,1981), Falih Khalaf, *Islamic Banks*, (Amman: Dar Al-Ketab Al-Hadith, 2002), and Ahmad Al-Bashir, Zakat for Juridical Personality, *Journal of Quranic and Islamic Studies*, No.9 (2004), p.181.

<sup>17</sup> See Khan Fahim, *Fiqh Foundations of the Theory of Islamic Economics*, in Ahmad Hasan (ed), *Fiqh Theoretical Foundations of Islamic Economics*, (Jeddah: Islamic Research and Training Institute, 2002), *Book of Readings* No.3. And Monzer Kahf, *Islamic Economics: What Went Wrong*, Paper presented at Islamic Development Bank Round Table, Jeddah (May 2004).

quickly slips into ascribing moral/psychological personhood. Colin Wight points to this slippage by emphasizing that, “The fact that the state is recognized as a juridical subject, does not entail that it is a moral or psychological subject capable of independent action.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, when the Egyptian Fatwa Council was asked to rule on the appropriateness of ascribing juridical personality to organizations, they accepted such practice as long as it is understood as a way of better managing and organizing the issuing of Fatwas (rulings) on certain arrangements where corporations operate. The council also accepted that corporations might have legal and financial responsibilities independent from those of human agents within. That said, they insisted that when the group of individuals managing the corporation ‘act immorally’, then juridical personality is not to be taken into account and accountability is directed towards individual human agents.<sup>19</sup> In other words, moral responsibility is still directed towards human agents. In his PhD thesis, Sayyed Othman gives a thorough assessment of the issue of corporate responsibility in Islam where he concludes that while corporate entities are essential for interaction with contemporary social arrangements, the acceptance of their causal powers and legal status should not replace the moral responsibility of human agency both at its individual and collective levels.<sup>20</sup>

The above discussion should not suggest that an Islamic notion of agency should stop at the collective level. A move to the corporate level is needed, not only to extend conceptual links with concepts of structures in IR theory, but also because the corporate level of the state is home to sources of agency that cannot be covered at the individual or collective levels, namely causal

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<sup>18</sup> Wight, ‘Politics as Ontology’, p. 193

<sup>19</sup> [www.dar-alifta.org](http://www.dar-alifta.org) (Fatwa Concepts-Juridical Personality, 20-2-2013).

<sup>20</sup> See Sayyed Othman, ‘Juridical Personality between Islamic Fiqh and Man-made legal Systems’ PhD Dissertation (Cairo University, Dar Al-Olum, 2007).

powers embedded within the structures of the state. This move, however, does not have to sacrifice human qualities as in mainstream IR theory. Collective action as introduced in this section paves the way for bringing to the state level important sources of agency, that is, the ideational resources of society, the realization of which under the structures of the state need the presence of human agency. In other words, individual human agents remain essential sources of agency aside from the ideational resources of the Muslim society and the causal powers of the structures of the state.

To recap, collective action is strongly encouraged, even assumed and taken for granted in Islam. The definition of the collective action problem however, seems not to be limited to only creating the conditions under which cooperation among self-interested individuals can be sustained. Rather, Islamic collective action has a clear moral purpose beyond cooperation; in this light, the technicality and know-how of institutionalization is a means to increase the causal power of Islamic community. The movement from individual action to collective action and the creation of institutional facts and corporate entities does not have to result or end in transferring action and moral responsibility to those corporate entities, although their causal responsibility in linking, constraining and enabling collective action should be taken into account to better capture Islamic collective action in macro-arrangements like international relations. This means that given the centrality of moral responsibility in the Islamic view of agency, human agents both as individuals and group/community are still needed and cannot be replaced at the international borders. Given the multiplicity of agential responsibility between the moral and the causal, it is clear that this chapter cannot aim at a parsimonious, neat, sharp edged, concept of Islamic agency in international relations. Instead, the aim is to reach an Islamic account of agency in international relations that specifies the elements and levels of agency. This section identified,



rather loosely, three sources of agency, namely, ideational resources of society, causal powers of the state, and human agency within the state. The next step is to introduce a framework that respects the multiplicity of agential sources and gives them conceptual and theoretical coherence. The aim is not only to coordinate those sources of agency in a way that can be mapped onto our function of agency as endowed, embodied, intentional action, but also places them within a relational structure of authorization and accountability in order to serve as a political expression of *Estekhlaf* ready for operationalization under the conceptualization of structures of international relations. Luckily, Manjoud's framework of political *Estekhlaf* seems to, almost, fit the task.

### ***Estekhlaf: Back to the Political***

An important point to carry on from the discussions in section one is that collective action remains a property of community/group, which can take shape in, but not be replaced with, organizations and institutions. As mentioned above, this is not how collective action is viewed in western IR theory where the collective action problem ends at the state level, and then a whole “new” collective action problem starts at the international level, only between states as unitary actors. In between, there is a blind spot where collective intentionality and action are transferred to the state. Finding a place to express an Islamic view of agency in international relations is best served by shedding light on this blind spot. At this ‘blind spot’ two processes take place, first, separating state from society, and second, omitting human agency within the structures of the state. Examination of these processes, it turn, can allow for rescuing two sources of agency that are usually overlooked in IR theory, namely, ideational resources of society, and human agency within state structures. It is important at this stage to distinguish between two understandings of the state. In his article *State and Society in International Relations: A Second Agenda*, Fred

Halliday distinguishes between the totality of the state as inclusive of territory, government, people, society, etc. and the institutional state as a specific set of coercive and administrative institutions.<sup>21</sup> The former could also be labeled state-society complex, although as will be demonstrated this need not be tied to production and material forces as in Robert Cox's understanding of the state-society complex.<sup>22</sup> With this clarification in mind, Mustafa Manjoud offers a framework of the "Islamic state" which is based on the notion of *Estekhlaf*. His effort can best be described as an application of the general ontology of *Estekhlaf* to the specific realm of governance; he coined it "political Estekhlaf".

It should be mentioned, however, that the political application of *Estekhlaf* is as contested as its very meaning and interpretation as demonstrated in chapter one. Even among those who accept the "*Khalifah*" as a description of human beings that link them to Allah (SWT) as his deputies and vice-regents on earth an associated debate continues; on one side, the role of "*Khalifah*" is seen to be applied to only the Muslim ruler. The ontological implication of which is that the relationship of vice-regency is a direct one between Allah (SWT) and the Muslim ruler with the inevitable political implications of unquestioned obligation for obedience by Muslim *Ummah*. This, rather, narrow application of *Estekhlaf* to the political realm appears most clearly in Mawardi's works and best exemplified by the following saying of the first Caliphate of the Ummayyah royalty: "Earth is for Allah (SWT), and I'm his deputy on earth, whatever I take is mine, and whatever I leave is my grace".<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Fred Halliday, 'State and Society in International Relations: A second Agenda', Millennium Journal of International Studies, Vol. 16, No. 2 (June 1987).

<sup>22</sup> Robert Cox, 'Social Forces, States, and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', Millennium Journal of International Studies, Vol. 10, No. 2, (June 1981).

<sup>23</sup> Ahmad Al-Balathri, "Ansab Al-Ashraf", (Beirut: Dar Al-Fikr:1996), P.1319.

On the other side, the relationship of *Estekhlaf* is widened. A possibility that is based on the interpretation that every human being is a “*Khalifah*”. The political implication for this wider understanding of *Estekhlaf* can best captured through the words of Rachid Al-Gannoushi: “The Islamic perspective makes *Estekhlaf* the responsibility of every individual and the responsibility of the whole Ummah...While this perspective also points to the need of the presence of an authority to serve Muslims and implement Islamic laws, holders of this authority, however, do not need to be directly authorized from Allah (SWT) but from the Muslim *Ummah* to lead their mission of *Estekhlaf* through Omran, observing higher values, and following guidelines of Allah (SWT)”.<sup>24</sup>

Other efforts tried to bring the two understandings of political dimensions of *Estekhlaf* together through preserving relationships of authorization and accountability between Allah (SWT) and Muslims labeling it “*Estekhlaf Aam*” or “general *Estekhlaf*”, and links of authorization and accountability between Allah (SWT) and Muslim rulers “*Estekhlaf Khas*” or “Special *Estekhlaf*.”<sup>25</sup> Such efforts, however, do not offer much guidance on how these parallel relations can impact state-society relationships within an Islamic state-society complex.

Within this intellectual background, Manjoud’s work offer considerable advantage. For Manjoud the Islamic state is “The organizational/institutional framework through which the Muslim group/community embodies political *Estekhlaf* to achieve faith-based witnessing by preserving religion and use it (religion) to manage the affairs of this life among themselves and between them and other societies.”<sup>26</sup> Clearly, Manjoud offers a framework of the Islamic state as a “total state” that includes within its reference the Muslim society or group, which is very

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<sup>24</sup> Rachid Al-Gannoushi, “Discussions on Secularism and Civil Society”, (Amman: Dar Al-Forqan, 1999), P58.

<sup>25</sup> See Sabri Mohammad Khalil, “The Political Dimensions of *Estekhlaf*”, (Khartoum: Khartoum University, 2001).

<sup>26</sup> Mutaafa Manjoud, ‘The Islamic State as The Unit of Foreign Relations of Islam’, in Nadia Mustapha’s ‘International Relations in Islam’, (Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1996) p.78

suitable for expressing “ideational resources” as a source of agency. He does not stop, here, however, but offers what could be described as a ‘second-cut’ where he breaks down “political *Estekhlaf*” to the following elements:

First is *Almostakhlef* (the one who gives agency or authorizes action) that is Allah (SWT), who authorized the Muslim community/group to choose who leads their mission of *Estekhlaf*. Second is *Almostakhlaf* that is the chosen individual/group to lead the Muslim community/group. Third is *Almostakhlaf feh*, which is the temporal and spatial context of *Estekhlaf*. Fourth is *Almostakhlaf laho*, those who receive the returns and achievements of political *Estekhlaf*, namely the Muslim community/group. Fifth is *Almostakhlaf behe*, these are the mediums of political *Estekhlaf*, including legitimacy, use of force, and other tools of institutionalization and authorizations.<sup>27</sup>

Manjoud’s “second cut” of political *Estekhlaf* articulates it as a set of relationships of authorization and accountability, most important of which is that between *Allah* (SWT), *Almostakhlef*, and the Muslim community or group, who are authorized and subsequently are morally responsible for “choosing” those who lead them: *Almostakhlaf*. This creates another relationship of authorization and accountability between the Muslim community and its political leadership. This, in turn brings to light another source of agency, namely, human agency in the form of *Almostakhlaf*, the individual political leaders or members of government. Out of the three proposed sources of agency in section one, Manjoud’s framework includes two: ideational resources of society through inclusion of the Muslim society, and human agents within the state structure as political leadership. His framework even maps their relationship according to *Estekhlaf* by extending this relationship as one of authorization and accountability to *Allah* (SWT): *Almostakhlef*. Mind, however, that the relationship is between society and political leaders, not between society and state as in western literature. This is understandable given that extending relationships of accountability and authorization to the state, a corporate entity, does

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<sup>27</sup> Manjoud, ‘Islamic State’, p.85

not “fit” the ontology of *Estekhlaf* which is partly based on moral responsibility directed towards satisfying the role of *Khalifah*, something that corporate entities like the state are clearly not capable of. Instead of the ontological move of allocating agency to the state and omitting human agency at the national/international borders as in western IR theory, Manjoud takes the opposite extreme, emphasizing human political leadership and omitting a conceptual space for the state, the institutional state not the total state, which is captured by his overall framework of political *Estekhlaf*. Minus a conceptual space for the institutional state, what we have is an Islamic state as an organizational/institutional framework through which the Muslim group expresses political *Estekhlaf* and enjoys emotional bonds, collective intentionality, a collective sense of moral responsibility before *Allah* (SWT), and further a collective effort to coordinate and harmonize their actions through a relationship of authorization and accountability with their government and political leaders. Yet, we still do not have causal powers of the institutional state; we do not have the unity and persistence of institutionalization, which can only be achieved at the corporate not the collective level. In other words, Although Manjoud’s political *Estekhlaf* offers a generous conceptual space for the Muslim society as the champion of the framework of the Islamic state as a totality, and also a space for human agency as political leaders and members of government linked through *Estekhlaf* to the Muslim society, his framework lacks the needed “institutional edge” that takes collective action as a property of society to the borders of international relations, especially when agency is, partly, understood as “the power to do”<sup>28</sup> in these terms, the institutional power or casual responsibility are missing.

Even then, the rewards for political *Estekhlaf* remain substantial, namely, preserving human agency, and the Islamic collective sense of a mission and moral purpose beyond solving their

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<sup>28</sup> Barry Buzan, Richard Little, and Charles Jones, ‘The logic of anarchy: Neorealism to Structural Realism’. (New York : Columbia University Press, 1993) p. 103

collective action problems. According to Manjoud's framework, the structure of Islamic agency now includes: Muslim society, political leadership/government, and institutional framework that relate them in the context of *Estekhlaf*. These are all important elements that should not be sidelined when conceptualizing Islamic agency in international relations in favor of the more manageable Weberian conceptualization of the state as "organizational actor", or the "hesitant" pluralist image of the state as an instrumental solution for societal actors with diverse interests.

The next logical step is to sharpen the causal powers of Manjoud's framework of political *Estekhlaf* in order to enhance the reproductive/transformational capacities in preparation for operationalization under a different conceptualization of structure. In short, we need to allocate a space within his framework for the institutional state that can serve as an institutional expression of collective action of the Muslim society and as a political platform for human political leaders that give their action socially driven causal powers. This can best be served through an engagement with frameworks or notions of state agency that offer a mirror image of Manjoud's framework where the emphasis is on the state per se. Yet, this engagement needs to be directed towards notions of state agency that offer an ontological treatment of the issue, not fictional one, in order to trace the process of distribution of agential sources across the individual, collective, and corporate levels and the ontological justifications for this distribution. The aim is to move the Islamic account of agency to the corporate level where causal sources of agency reside, without having to sacrifice human agency and the ideational sources of society.

*States are not people too:*

In his *Social Theory of International Politics* Wendt uses a whole chapter to give a detailed account of and ontological justifications for state agency, where the state comes out as capable of

intentional action, satisfying interests, and even ideational awareness, all without the “help” of human agents within state structures and society. Clearly, given the Islamic criteria offered in section one, the discussion in this section cannot agree with his findings, yet, it is through the detailed account and ontological justifications he offers that an Islamic account of agency can be expressed through making counter ontological claims, especially on the two axes of state-society relationship and presence, or absence, of human agents at the state level, and in the process move to the corporate level, although taking on board the human factor of agency.

Defending a limited minimalist definition of the state, Wendt argues in his discussion on the “problem of corporate agency” that the state is not an inherently modern phenomena, and it should be possible to develop transhistorical generalizations about its behavior.<sup>29</sup> For him, if there were organizations with sovereignty and a territorial monopoly on organized violence before the thirteenth century then there were states.<sup>30</sup> This realization, and the terms used to express it, brings mixed expectations to a researcher attempting to use Wendt’s arguments in order to enhance a framework for Islamic agency in international relations. On one hand, this argument can loosen the critique and sometimes the objection to the very phrase “Islamic state” or “Islamic agency”. On the other hand, the use of language like “transhistorical generalizations about its behavior” seems to tend towards the eternal wisdom of political realism, and silence ideational resources of society. Wendt breaks down his effort to develop a theory of state agency to three stages; the first stage is “to give his model of the state a ‘body’ by showing that it is an actor which cannot be reduced to its parts”.<sup>31</sup> In the second stage, he narrows the focus to the state per se, using the philosophical literature on corporate agency to show how the internal

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<sup>29</sup> Alexander Wendt, ‘Social Theory of international Politics’, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p.214

<sup>30</sup> Wendt, ‘Social Theory of International Politics’, p.214

<sup>31</sup> Wendt, ‘Social Theory of International Politics’, p.197

structure constitutes states as real, unitary actors.<sup>32</sup> In the third stage, he gives his model of the state “life” or “self” by ascribing to it “real” interests and identities.<sup>33</sup> He classifies identities into four types: primitive corporate identity serves as a site or platform for other identities; type identity is more social yet the characteristics that underlie type identities are still intrinsic to the actor; role identity is not based on intrinsic properties but is dependent on culture and exists only in relation to others; collective identity takes this further to capture the stage where the other becomes part of the self.<sup>34</sup> Interests, conversely, are classified as objective and subjective, the former are basic needs that the agent must reproduce in order to survive, while the latter are culturally driven ways and understandings of how to satisfy those needs.<sup>35</sup>

To take it from the start, Wendt’s “body of the state” or “the essential state” has five properties: (1) an institutional-legal order, (2) an organization claiming a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, (3) an organization with sovereignty, (4) a society, (5) territory. He derives links and give coherence to these five properties from three definitions of the state: (1) Weberian: state as an organizational actor which is conceptually independent from society; (2) pluralist; reducing the state to interest groups and individuals in society; and (3) Marxist; a structure of political authority that binds the “organizational actor” and society in a relationship of mutual constitution. Although Wendt acknowledges that the three definitions lead to three different referent points of the state, he insists that with careful treatment they can be rolled together to offer an account of the state as an organizational actor embedded in an institutional-legal order

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<sup>32</sup> Wendt, ‘Social Theory of International Politics’, p.197

<sup>33</sup> Wendt, ‘Social Theory of International Politics’, p.197

<sup>34</sup> Wendt, ‘Social Theory of International Politics’, p.229

<sup>35</sup> Wendt, ‘Social Theory of International Politics’, p.231



that constitutes it with sovereignty and a monopoly on the legitimate use of organized violence over a society in a territory.<sup>36</sup>

Clearly, Wendt's rather long definition fits Halliday's 'total state'. Yet, unlike Manjoud's framework of political *Estekhlaf* there is clear conceptual space for the institutional state or as he calls it, the state per se, only that to allocate this space for the corporate entity of the state he sacrifices society and human agency within the structures of the state. Whilst rolling together the Weberian, pluralist, and Marxist definitions of the state Wendt gives priority to the Weberian definition, the organizational actor. For him, it seems that the "organizational actor" is the aim (Weberian), "society" is a burden (Pluralist), and the Marxist structure of political authority is the solution. Indeed, "society" seems to trouble Wendt all through the chapter on corporate agency. The issue is that he wants to include society as part of the "body" of the state, but not of it "self" in order to move smoothly to his social constructivist arguments under the three cultures of anarchy. To reach this result, Wendt wants to conceptually separate state from society, and yet, keep a relationship of mutual constitution between the two. The first aim is achieved and welcomed. Mutual constitution, however, does not seem to hold. To see how the constitutive role of society and the contribution of its ideational resources to the construction of the identity of the institutional state are sacrificed we need to look at what can be viewed as the ontological backbone of Wendt's notion of state agency, that is the relationship between the structure of political authority, or the Marxist element in his definition of the state, on one hand, and type identity on the other.

For Wendt, structures of political authority constitute state actors as organizations distinct from their societies. Structures of political authority, however, are constituted or institutionalized in

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<sup>36</sup> Wendt, 'Social Theory of International Politics', p.213

the first place through an institutional legal order, one of the basic properties of the essential state as introduced by Wendt. He defines the institutional legal order as the norms, rules and principles by which conflict is handled, society is ruled, and social relations are governed.<sup>37</sup> He elaborates further that the institutional-legal order is partly the codification and regulation of the distribution of forms of power and material bases between the state and societal actors. This distribution, in turn results in forms of the state and regimes like ‘democratic’, ‘totalitarian’, etc. A few pages later he uses these examples to refer to type identity of states, and he does remind the reader that these types of states and regimes are constituted by principles that organize state-society relationships. Yet, according to Wendt’s overall framework, type identities play no constitutive or causal role in constructing interests or guiding behavior. Instead we have corporate identity resulting in a set of objective basic needs, and role identities that guide behaviour of satisfying those needs. In between, type identities do not seem to play any role. This can only mean that institutional-legal orders or structures of political authority, by extension, do not play any role in constituting the identity of the state or defining their interests. Too bad for Islamic state since having an Islamic legal institutional order, and even an *Estekhlaf* structure of political authority cannot have any impact on the construction of interests or guidance of behavior. Of course the relevant impact of type identity remains an empirical question, yet, there is no good reason why this opportunity for empirical testing should be limited theoretically.

As the discussion in section one suggests, what allows Wendt to maintain this ideational separation between state and society is his understanding of the legal-institutional order in instrumental terms. It exists mainly to solve collective action problems, handle conflict, rule

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<sup>37</sup> Wendt, ‘Social Theory of International Politics’, p.202.

society, and govern social relations. For Wendt, society is far from the emotionally bound together group, and the legal-institutional order is not exactly the “standards and rules from which members of society derive their dignity”.<sup>38</sup> If Wendt had viewed “society”, and the legal-institutional order in such terms, it would have been more difficult for him to maintain this ideational separation between society and the institutional state through his rather “functional use” of the structure of political authority that links the two and ultimately providing the state as a “body with needs” but no self with ideas and norms of “its own”.

It is surprising that “type identity” seems to receive the least attention in Wendt’s treatment despite its apparent relevance to both theory and practice in international relations. If “type identity” is basically about state-society relationship, or the structure of political authority that links/separates state and society as constituted by the institutional-legal order, then it carries the burden of being the battlefield for ideational change. After all, “spread of democracy”, “human rights”, “good governance” and all other “liberal” tools of the international society target, more than anything, the institutional-legal order of the totality of the state through the type identity of the institutional state. In other words, “type identity” conditions the balance of ideational contribution to the ‘self’ of the state of society on the one hand, and the international system/society on the other. The point is that for Wendt’s framework to work, type identity, and, subsequently, the structure of political authority and the institutional-legal order of the state has to be of a certain “type”, the “type” that tips the balance in favor of international structure. In these terms, “type identity” of the institutional state plays the role of a “Trojan horse” to the total state or state-society complex; on the one hand it blocks society and its legal and institutional order from making an impact on the identity of the institutional state, while on the other hand

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<sup>38</sup> Edward Shills, *Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p.138.

allowing international norms to go as deep as constructing the “standards and rules from which members of society derive their dignity” by serving as a platform for more social identities that the institutional state “picks up” in the process of socialization under cultures of the international system.

The risk of normative bias towards structural contents over assigned agential properties and capacities including ethical reasoning and moral assessment might not be apparent in Wendt’s rather narrow power-based possibilities of socialization: (Enmity, rivalry, and friendship). When his “state” is brought within a richer normative structure, the poverty of agential capacities for awareness of its “type identity”, assessment of institutional and cultural contexts of embodiment and managing and balancing between different sources of norms and ideas is apparent. These capacities are expected from any intentional agent in a given social arrangement.

This was apparent in Buzan’s renovated version of the English School Theory when borrowing Wendt’s schema of agential internationalization of international norms without much attention to agential capacities and the role of “type identity” in bringing on board the ideational resources of society. The issue, however, is that Buzan’s conceptualization of structure was normatively richer in that it included institutions of democracy, human rights, market economy, all of which target, more than anything, “type identity”. In his defence, Buzan acknowledges the liberal origins of those institutions and norms, and further gives special attention to the “resistance” of the Islamic world to the internalization of such institutions and norms.<sup>39</sup>

The following example highlights this ideational bias in Wendt’s framework: when he reaches the stage where he specifies the substantive interests and identities of his “state agent”, he adds

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<sup>39</sup> Barry Buzan, ‘From International To World Society: English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalization’, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) p.209

the interest of collective self-esteem to the list of objective interests, which according to him are interests that must be met in order for state-society complex to be reproduced.<sup>40</sup> The know-how for satisfying those needs, however, are subjective interests that usually come through learning and socialization within the culture of the international system. For Wendt collective self-esteem refers to a group's need to feel good about itself, for respect or status.<sup>41</sup> This objective interest of self-esteem for a group is also apparent in Shil's notions on community, only that Shil claims the pursuit of collective self-esteem, or dignity, in his articulation, for members of society and the values, standards, and rules they embody and follow. That is, Shil acknowledges the internal sources of subjective interest for satisfying the objective interest of collective self-esteem, while Wendt conditions collective self-esteem, or the "feel good status of a group about itself" on relationships with and views of the "significant other". If, as demonstrated above, forces of construction at the international level target, more than anything else, type identity, and type identity rests on, or describes the state-society relationship, which in turn is constituted by the institutional-legal order that partly hosts the values, standards and rules from which the group/community members derive their dignity, and, in "our" case those values, standards, and rules are based on Islamic collective morals and guidelines for *Tazkiyah* (Purification), then satisfying the objective need of collective self-esteem involves making a choice between Islamic values that come from the Muslim society, and between values and norms of the culture of the international system, that may or may not conform to those Islamic values. This moment of agential choice where ideational sources of society make their presence is absent in western mainstream IR theoretical treatment of agency. Thanks to Wendt's detailed moves of constructing state agency, an Islamic account of agency can spot links and relationships where it

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<sup>40</sup> Wendt, 'Social Theory of International Politics', p.237

<sup>41</sup> Wendt, 'Social Theory of International Politics', p.236

can raise ontological and normative objections and suggest counter moves and claims. The above was such an attempt to argue for re-examination of the state-society relationship in order to highlight ideational resources as an important element of state agency.

According to the political structure of *Estekhlaf* which binds political leadership to the Muslim society in a relationship of authorization and accountability, it could be expected that the Muslim society “would want to know” who is responsible for any possible transformation of the values, standards, and rules that make their institutional-legal order, one that does not fit with their culture. The institutional state cannot offer an ethical reasoning for this possible transformation that might come from socialization within the international system. Instead we need human agents embedded within the institutional state in order to place moral responsibility for these processes. This takes us to the other point of engagement with Wendt’s framework in order to rescue human agents at the state level in order to go beyond causal to moral responsibility. Wendt’s notion of “states are people too” where he assigns “real” personhood to states in terms of having the capacity for intentional action basically denudes the state level of human agency.<sup>42</sup> His “soldier” example in this context is counter-productive to his argument where he states that, “We do not hold the soldier who kills an enemy in war responsible for his actions because he is authorized to kill by his state”.<sup>43</sup> This does not sound right, a soldier who kills an enemy in war is authorized by his government not state, unless Wendt means the totality of the state which brings society on board, not the institutional state, or state per se. The issue is that the “act of killing an enemy” needs a moral justification and hence an intentional agent to take moral responsibility for it. Despite his attempts to articulate the institutional state as real intentional

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<sup>42</sup> Colin Wight, ‘Social Activity without Human Action?’, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 30, issue 2, (April 2004) p. 269

<sup>43</sup> Wendt, ‘Social Theory of International Politics’, p.221

agent, still it cannot hold its aground as an agent that can ethically reason about the action of killing. It was not the U.S institutional state that invaded Iraq, it is George W. Bush and his government, or the totality of the U.S state-society complex. By the same token, it was not the Iraqi state who invaded Kuwait, but Saddam Hussein and his government, or the totality of Iraqi state-society complex. Of course the agential power of the state-society complex, or totality of the state is limited because it lacks the unity and persistence of the institutional state, but at least it serves as a context where sources of moral responsibility can be traced and distinguished from causal responsibility and subsequently one can locate the “right” research problem to the right entity. It is understood that this needs a methodological discussion on “bracketing” and levels of analysis, etc. which will be taken up in the next section, for now however, this chapter is still reluctant to engage in a moral argument with the state per se...with a structure!

This reluctance might be sustained by the fact that I come from a country (Kuwait) where 90% of its population work in the public sector. I understand that at the end of a working day, when we leave our offices, turn off the lights, and go home, the state does not disappear. I understand that the ensemble of institutions that make up the state including Foreign Ministry, Ministry of Finance, Central Bank, etc. have existence beyond human agents, that is “us”, yet, I also understand that the institutional state cannot “act” unless we wake up the next day, and choose to go to work and turn on the light...without human agents, the institutional state is a very dark place!

When human agents come to embody a social role within the state structure they do not come in as an empty platform, whose only function is to reproduce the intentionality or reason of the state. Human agents within the institutional state are more than just bureaucrats instrumentally calculating their benefits of cooperating within the state structure as in the Weberian rational

bureaucratic model,<sup>44</sup> nor do they define their identities and interests by internalizing corporate norms. Members of government or individuals within the state structures are not agents of the institutional state or state per se. Rather they are agents of the total state or the state-society complex.

To conclude, engagement with Wendt's ontological treatment of state agency served an aim of highlighting the lack of a theoretical space for an institutional state in Manjoud's framework of political *Estekhlaf*. At the same time, the discussion demonstrated how allocating a space for the institutional state could result in sacrificing other important elements of agency, namely, ideational resources of society and human agency within the structures of the institutional state given the ontological limits shown above. Equally important, shedding light on what can be called "blind spots" in climbing agential levels from the individual to the corporate can be used as a platform for remapping the relationships between agential elements across different levels of social reality. It is towards this task that the next section turns.

### ***Climbing the Levels of Analysis:***

The discussions in section two demonstrated that Manjoud's framework of political *Estekhlaf* is indeed an important step that takes Islamic agency as defined through *Estekhlaf* from the individual level to the collective level by bringing on board the Muslim society in an organizational framework defining the totality of the Islamic state-society complex. It was also demonstrated, however, that this framework lacked a conceptual space for the institutional state as a separate corporate structure which gives political leadership (*Almostakhlaf*) the needed organizational platform where their intentional human action "meets" the institutional causal

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<sup>44</sup> Martin Hollis & Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) p.71



powers of the state in order to make contact with international level. While engagement with Wendt was helpful in highlighting the corporate inadequacy in Manjoud's framework, it also highlighted a tension in acknowledging sources of agency: Manjoud emphasizing human agency as political leaders and ideational resources of society, Wendt emphasizing the institutional state. Moreover, the ontological treatment suggested by Wendt to emphasize state agency could only result in sacrificing Manjoud's sources of agency. In other words, the two did not fit together in order to give a coherent account of agency. More specifically, insertion of Wendt's institutional state within Manjoud's framework to sharpen its causal powers and increase its potential for agency at the international level was not ontologically possible. The next step is to look for a more political *Estekhlaf*-friendly notion of the institutional state.

Again, Wight seems to offer another lifeline; his representation of the institutional state as "a complex ensemble of organizations and institutions with various capacities inscribed in it" can give *Almostakhlaf* just the needed organizational platform since his notion of the state insists that those capacities and the powers inscribed in the state are only ever activated through the agency of the structurally located or positioned human agents located in specific structural conjectures.<sup>45</sup> He further elaborates, "The state does not exercise power, but constrains and/or enables embodied agents to act".<sup>46</sup> In this context, we have causal powers and capacities inscribed in the structures of the institutional state, yet, we do not lose human agency since those powers can only be activated through them. Moreover, there is nothing in Wight's notion of the state as a structure that constrains or enables embodied agents to act that make it an uncomfortable home for the human *Khalifah* or *Almostakhlaf* since constraining or enabling action does not omit any essential agential capacities needed to extend *Estekhlaf* to the state level, like freedom of

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<sup>45</sup> Wight, 'Politics as Ontology' p.220

<sup>46</sup> Wight, 'Politics as Ontology' p.220

subjectivity, intentionality or sense of accountability before *Allah* (SWT). Equally important, as a complex ensemble of organizations and institutions, the state itself can comfortably reside within, or emerges out of, Manjoud's framework as a state-society complex defined by *Estekhلاف* and linked to society through the structure of political authority that acknowledges the ideational resources of society.

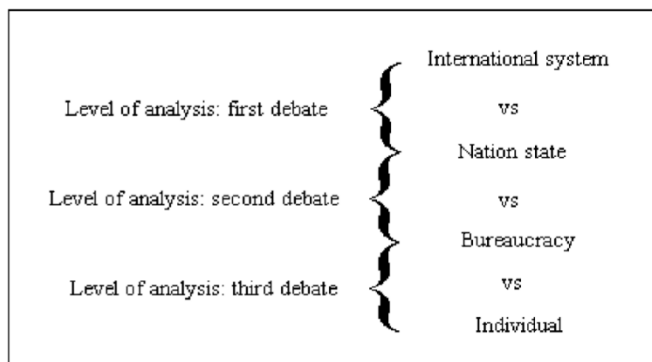
To be sure, Wight's notion of the state is directly borrowed from Bob Jessop's state theory. Jessop define the state as "a distinct ensemble of institutions and organizations whose socially accepted function is to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on a given population in the name of their "common interest" or "general will".<sup>47</sup> Although Wight clearly builds on Jessop's definition of the state, the analytical aims of the two authors are different; Wight is concerned with defending the ontological argument that the state is not itself an actor but a structure that only facilitates the intentional action of human agents that are necessary for social action -- a point that is central for arguing for placing a human agent as "*AlMostakhlaf*" within the state structure in this chapter. Jessop, on the other hand, aims at highlighting important links between the state and the political sphere and, indeed, the wider society. Although Wight does acknowledge the placing of the state structures within their wider social field by, again, borrowing Jessop's work on hegemonic and states projects as results of strategic interaction among different agents placed within and outside state structures, he does not acknowledge the context of this strategic interaction in Jessop's work who emphasize elements of "common interest" or "general will". Which is when offered in a generic term as Jessop does, at least initially, could contribute to shedding light on state-society links allowing the ideational resources of society to appear as a source of agency within a given state-society complex.

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<sup>47</sup> Bob Jessop, "State Power", (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008) p.9.

Together Wight’s emphasis on intentional human action within the state structure and Jessop’s wider definition of the state ensure that at the institutional level we have now human agents capable of intentional action and corporate structures that give those agents causal powers not available to others outside this complex ensemble of organizations and institutions. Yet, those outside the institutional state, as members of the state-society complex, are not only linked instrumentally to the state through an institutional legal order that defines, “how society is ruled” but also through, “powerful common understandings or meaning...forming a strong relational glue that binds them together through the embodiment of collective values.”<sup>48</sup>

Mapping this multilayered form of agency begs for a pictorial expression. If Colin Wight is right about the claim that David Singer’s levels of analysis still seems to grip the collective disciplinary imagination,<sup>49</sup> (Figure 4.1) then indeed they appear as a good target or platform where the Islamic view of agency can be mapped on and linked to other entities and processes of international relations that exist at other levels of reality.



(Figure 4.1) The dominant IR account of Levels of Analysis

That said, according to Wight, Singer’s levels of analysis suffers from ontological problems that can lead to confusion over the very nature and properties of entities residing at those levels, and

<sup>48</sup> Migdal, *State in Society*, p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> Wight, ‘Politics as Ontology’, p.102.

subsequently the causal relationships among them. His main critique of Singer's levels is directed towards the conflation of three problems, namely: The agent-structure, levels of analysis, and macro-micro problem, into one problem. Although Wight acknowledges that they all express the underlying imperative of understanding and explaining how social parts relate to social wholes, he believes that each refers to a distinct "moment" in research programmes.<sup>50</sup> He makes the distinctions along the following lines; first, the agent-structure problem is viewed as the most basic of the three as a sociological development of what used to be called the individual-society connection<sup>51</sup> and is concerned with the character of social reality. Second, the macro-micro problem is concerned with a particular aspect of this predefined reality that is selected for consideration,<sup>52</sup> and thus it is concerned with specifying the unit of analysis of the research. Only then, the levels of analysis can be meaningful as it is concerned with how to explain the object under consideration in terms of differing levels.<sup>53</sup> Conflation of the three problems results in distorted disciplinary imagination, most important of which, according to Wight, is the tendency to force/allow the relocation of agency at every move up or down the levels, so that what appears as a structure on one level becomes an agent on another.<sup>54</sup> Unsatisfied with this image, he comes up with his reconfigured version of levels of analysis, see (figure 4.2).

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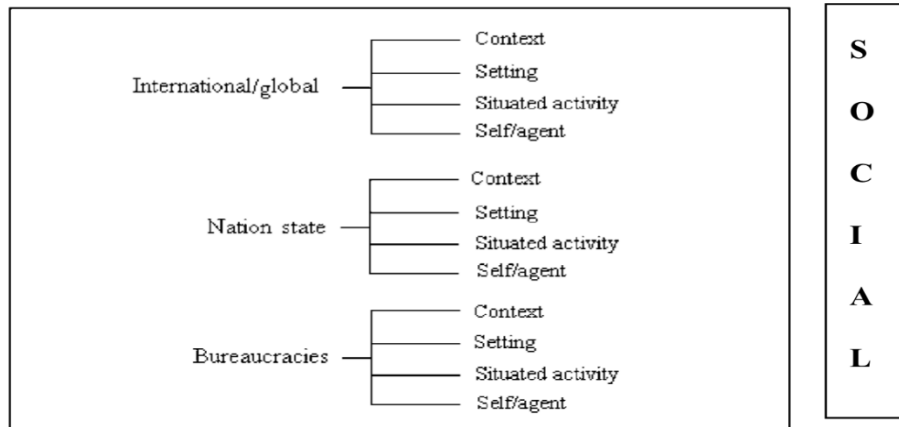
<sup>50</sup> Wight, 'Politics as Ontology', p.103.

<sup>51</sup> Wight, 'Politics as Ontology', p.104.

<sup>52</sup> Wight, 'Politics as Ontology', p.104.

<sup>53</sup> Wight, 'Politics as Ontology', p.103.

<sup>54</sup> Wight, 'Politics as Ontology', p.107.



(Figure 4.2) Wight's reconfigured version of levels-of-analysis

Wight makes his critical realist commitments clear in this reconfigured version by insisting on the following principles: first is the necessity of the presence of both agency and structures for any social act to be possible, and that “in the social sciences agency cannot refer to social organization since it is only through the acts of embodied human agents that action can occur”.<sup>55</sup> Accordingly he includes human agency in every level, only tied to their structural contexts (situated activity, setting, and context) as components in every level. This fits the critical realist principle of stratified ontology. Second, he insists on the interpenetrating nature of levels, a notion that he borrows from Heikki Patomaki's notion of interpenetrating contexts and is well grounded in the critical realist ontology that insists on the claim that all social systems are open systems. In this respect, part of the context of each of the levels is the other levels.<sup>56</sup>

Clearly, Wight's reconfigured version of the levels of analysis offers an improved ontological landscape for expressing and operationalizing the Islamic view of agency, Equally clear, Singer's original version of levels of analysis cannot be very helpful in this respect given the tendency to

<sup>55</sup> Wight, 'Politics as Ontology', p.111.

<sup>56</sup> Wight, 'Politics as Ontology', p.113.

force/allow the relocation of agency at every move up or down the levels, which effectively means that by the second level we lose human agency. The key to Wight's improvement is the disentanglement of the three problems mentioned above and the subsequent distinction between mapping social reality, specifying the nature and properties of units to be analyzed according to this social reality, and then making a choice on the relevant level of explanation or analysis. In this context, Wight rightly borrows the label "levels of being" from Onuf.<sup>57</sup> So far, the levels of social reality according to Islamic ontological principles can be summarized as follows: At the bottom level we have an Islamic state-society complex, which can be further stratified to the sub-levels of individuals at the bottom sub-level, moving up to collective action, and then functional (state, and non-state) and sectorial (political, economic, social, etc.) various institutions and corporate entities, together they make up Manjoud's total organizational and institutional framework through which the Muslim society embody political *Estekhlaf*. The second level hosts the institutional state. Given the discussion above that reached the conclusions of the necessity of the presence of human agency within the state structure and the need to distinguish between human intentionality on the one hand, and the causal powers of the state on the other hand, it is Wight's conceptualization of the state that is chosen to populate this level instead of Wendt's conceptualization of the state. As demonstrated in figure 4.3 the sub-levels of the state level correspond to these ontological principles.

The third level of being is the international level: here, there are no agents, but only structurally positioned and differentiated social roles as structural slots through which agents, as they take form up to the second level of being, embody in order to make contact and link their causal powers to the structures of international relations. The international level is a structural terrain

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<sup>57</sup> Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p.103.

conceptualized as links between planes of social activity as represented in chapter three. With the relational plane which hosts social roles as the most basic, once agents embody them, the pictorial expression takes a horizontal shape rather than a vertical one in order to express the links between the inter-subjective or idealist plane of social activity and the material planes of social activity. Figure 4.3 gives a pictorial expression of the proposed version of levels of being.

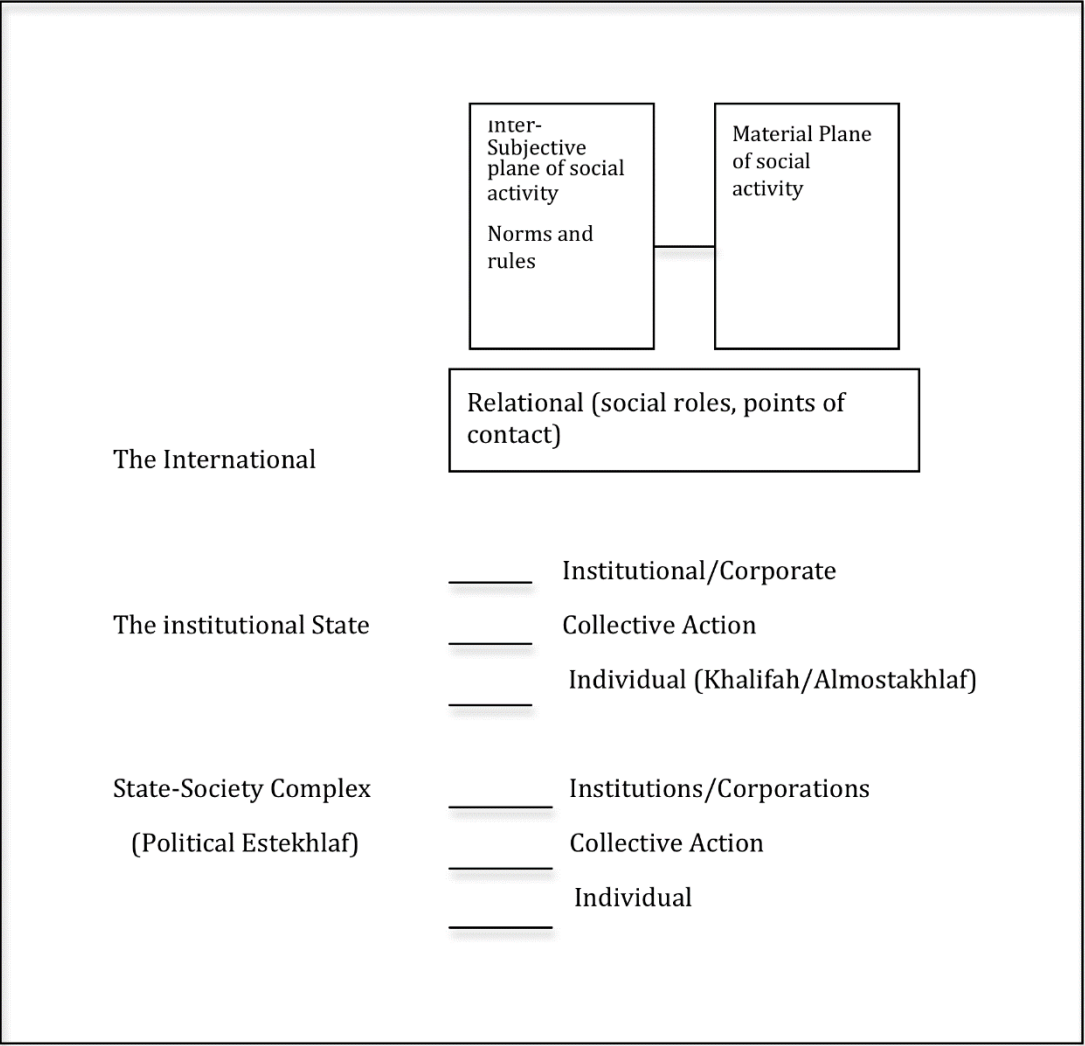


Figure 4.3

There is no doubt that this effort will be subject to many objections, and it does need some explaining. This explaining should be done against Wight’s reconfigured versions of levels of analysis since he already offered a critique of Singer’s levels, which this discussion builds on. First, with respect to changing the bottom level from the narrow micro parts of bureaucracies as the parts from which the “whole” of the institutional state emerges, to the wider “macro” state-society complex which hosts the institutional state, the argument is that while the stratification of



reality is “real”, the way this stratification is “imagined” as levels is conventional.<sup>58</sup> Onuf suggests just that when he points out that one of these conventions or schemes is to put the smallest and most numerous positivities at the bottom of the picture and the largest (by definition a single positivity) at the top.<sup>59</sup> Onuf elaborates, “In our culture, as in our field, we would have difficulty getting along without the language of levels. In other cultures people make wholes of their own (even if they look like ours) and mark their significance with conventions that we may not even recognize”.<sup>60</sup> He concludes that how many wholes our minds construct and how we represent them is a matter of choice and convention.<sup>61</sup> While I will still stick to the language of “levels” this is a gesture of cultural pluralism that one can hardly pass. In this light, non-western views might not share individualization both of entities and human agents, and instead emphasize relationships. Accordingly, the institutional state does not appear as a whole emerging out of bureaucracies, but a plant that grows out of a soil, that is the culture, rules and norms of society. As radical as Wight’s reconfigured version of analysis might seem, he still starts his effort with asking the question “Levels of what?” to which he provides an answer; “Levels of political organization”,<sup>62</sup> an answer that pushes him to reproduce the conventional de-linking of the institutional state from the wider state-society complex. He acknowledges that his scheme of levels can be amended to cover other aspects of the social field, legal, economic, social and cultural, for example. Yet, culture is not a sector or sphere of society distinct from the economy or polity, but present wherever shared knowledge is found.<sup>63</sup> Replacing culture of society from our pictorial expression to collection of bureaucracies can only lend our institutional state easily

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<sup>58</sup> Nicholas Onuf, ‘Levels’, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (March 1995) p. 53.

<sup>59</sup> Onuf, ‘Levels’, p. 44.

<sup>60</sup> Onuf, ‘Levels’, p. 53.

<sup>61</sup> Onuf, ‘Levels’, p.53.

<sup>62</sup> Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p.111.

<sup>63</sup> Wendt, ‘*Social Theory of International Politics*’, p. 142.

to the process of individualization and homogenization at the international level.<sup>64</sup> Another way to justify this change of the bottom level is to recall Jessop's working definition of the state that emphasizes important links between the state and its wider society. According to Jessop, those links depend on the nature of social formation (Capitalism, feudalism, etc.) and political regimes also differ across capitalist social formations for example.<sup>65</sup> Overall Jessop, rightly, believes that the state never achieves full closure or complete separation from society<sup>66</sup>. This also supports the proposal to embed the state within the wider state-society complex as proposed in the reconfigured version of the levels of analysis.

The second justification for the proposed scheme of levels in this section concerns the change of Wight's sub-levels or components at the bottom and intermediate levels from structural contexts of the self/agent/individual (situated activity, setting, context) to agential levels that shares the self/agent/individual sub-level but give it higher agential expressions (collective action, and institutional/corporations) rather than structural contexts. It should be remembered that this proposal is not developed for the sake of doing systematic IR theory. Instead, the aim is to enhance the capacity to "see things" from an agential angle. This does not mean, however, that agency is not tied to structural context. Instead, it takes as a given that structural context is provided for once agential expression takes an institutional shape in the sub-level of institutions/corporations. This does not have to lead to conflation or confusion of agency and structure, a warning given by Bhaskar prior to developing his transformational model of social activity.<sup>67</sup> Rather, it highlights the distribution of agential sources across levels and sub-levels;

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<sup>64</sup> John Ruggie, 'Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations', *International Organization*, Vol. 47, No. 1, (Winter 1993)

<sup>65</sup> Jessop, *State Power*, p.10.

<sup>66</sup> Jessop, *State Power*, p.10.

<sup>67</sup> Roy Bhaskar, 'Possibility of Naturalism: A philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences', (London: Routledge, Third Edition, 1998) p. 35.

after all, institutions and structures do have causal powers inscribed within them. They can constrain actions of agents within, and thus serve as a structure in the conventional sense of effecting behavior; alternatively they can facilitate actions of those agents, effectively taking these actions to higher social arrangements serving as a source of agency. Yet, agency is more than causal powers; a principle which ensures that acknowledgement of the causal sources of agency that takes shape at the top sub-level (institutional/corporations) of the level of the institutional state does not have to lead to the tendency to force/allow the relocation of agency at every move up or down the levels, so that what appears as a structure on one level becomes an agent on another. Rather, agency still needs intentional human individuals within the institutional state and the ideational resources of society at the bottom level of the state-society complex.

The third justification concerns the top level or the international level. Again this proposal differs from Wight's at this level. The difference is his inclusion of a sub-level of self/agent at the international level and refraining from doing so at the proposed version of levels in this section. Here, Wight's approach is more radical, while, I agree, the approach proposed in this section is more defensive and cautious, one that keeps an eye on constitutive forces of the international level on identity and interests of Islamic agents. Although the approach applies Wight's conceptualization of structure as links between Bhaksar's planes of social activity it sets aside the fourth plane of social activity, the self/agent as suggested in chapter three for normative and analytical reasons. Instead, agency, its "body", and "self", to use Wendt's terms, occupy a space in two levels: the state-society complex and the institutional state. At the international level there are social roles as structural slots that agents fill, but no agents. This formulation that distinguishes between real agency, and social roles as structural slots to be filled by agents, allocates a necessary space for agents to reflect on the social roles they embody at the

international level. For this reason, the proposed pictorial expression of the international level starts with a horizontal expression of the relational plane of social activity as a gate to the international level that grant agents access to the international level through embodying social roles, such as “member of international society”. Mind also that Wight continues the use of vertical expression and structural contexts at the international level, while the proposed version in this section offers a neutral expression of the links between planes of social activity especially the material and the intersubjective/idealist. Leaving the hierarchy between the materialist and the idealist planes of social activity to the actual and substantive configuration of contemporary international relations; a configuration that may or may not be in line with the hierarchal configuration of the mission of *Estekhlaf* where *Tawhid* (relational) conditions *Tazkiyah* (idealist), which in turn, conditions *Omran* (material).

***Conclusion:***

While the chapter ended with a proposed version of analysis that should give a pictorial expression of the function of Islamic agency as endowed, embodied, intentional action, the aim of this chapter was to stretch the links between endowment, intentionality and embodiment from the individual to the collective and corporate levels. More specifically, the aim was to take *Estekhlaf* to the state level, not allocate *Estekhlaf* to the state. To this end, three sources of agency were proposed, ideational resources of society, the institutional state, and human agents within the institutional state. Conceptually, this was achieved by bringing Manjoud’s framework and Wight’s notion of the state together. Manjoud provided, or preserved, the ideational resources of society through a state-society complex pursuing political *Estekhlaf*, authorizing human agents as political leaders to lead this collective mission; yet lacking a conceptual space for separate political structure to facilitate their actions, namely the institutional state. This was

provided by Wight's notion of the state with causal powers inscribed in its structures facilitating the actions of agents within. Islamic agency as endowed, embodied, intentional action, previously a function of individual human agency, can now be mapped at the three sources of agency that stretches from the individual to the corporate level and linked through the political structure of *Estekhlaf*. Firstly, intentionality as a property of human political leadership. Secondly, endowment, or the relationship of authorization and accountability, as a political structure passing through the Muslim society but still originated by *Almostakhelf*, Allah (SWT). Thirdly, embodiment links the eternal role of *Khalifah*, or Manjoud's *Almostakhalf*,<sup>68</sup> to the social role of political leader or statesmen filled by human agency at the structure of the institutional state. Alternatively, taking the difference between methodological bracketing and ontological confusion of properties seriously, one can treat the totality of the Islamic state-society complex as one "unit of agency" in order to embody the macro social role of international relations. Now this can be a safe exercise since the version of levels of analysis proposed in section three should give clarity and coherence to this exercise. In other words, second order embodiment where the Islamic state-society complex fills the social role of "member of international society" does not have to take the mainstream route of abstraction which usually results in the loss of human qualities. Rather, it involves careful allocation of the research problem to the right level of agency.

The potential of this effort that gives Islamic understanding of human agency an institutional and corporate expression cannot be fully realized unless matched by a mirror effort that gives the structures of international relations a human expression. That is, the *Khalifah* as a human agent,

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<sup>68</sup> Manjoud uses AlMostakhlaf as derivative of Khalifah in order to emphasize the relationship between political leadership and the Muslim Society. In this thesis however, the use of the term Khalifah will continue in order to maintain ontological emphasis.

supported by the ideational resources of society and empowered by the causal powers of the institutional state should find a counterpart at the international level in order to negotiate normative claims, and avoid addressing “deaf” macro structures that do not answer to agents. It is towards the task of searching for this individual and constructing the international stage where the encounter takes place that the next chapter turns.

**Chapter Five**  
***The Modern International Society: Modern Individual's Institutional Design on the Field of Estekhlaf***

Chapter four was an attempt to move Islamic agency as defined by the concept of *Khalifah* to the state level by stretching its underlying elements, endowment, embodiment, and intentional action to cover the collective and corporate levels of agency. If chapter four was an attempt to institutionalize *Estekhlaf*, this chapter is an effort to humanize the institutional structure of international relations. In effect, this effort moves the discussion from the ontological to the theoretical and substantive by applying the ontological package introduced in chapters three and four to contemporary international relations. The last chapter ended with a proposed two levels of analysis, namely: the state-society complex and the institutional state were populated with meanings and relationships of political *Estekhlaf*. The aim of this chapter is to “fill” the boxes at the international level, representing planes of social activity (See figure 4.3): the relational, ideational, and material, and further suggests relational configuration among them in order to fit Wight's conceptualization of structure as links between planes of social activity. This is an intermediate aim that serves the overall aim of assessing the structural configuration of contemporary international relations according to *Estekhlaf* and the configuration among its pillars: *Tawhid*, *Tazkiyah*, and *Omran*. Unfortunately, Wight does not build a theoretical framework based on his conceptualization of structure nor other critical realists move confidently

beyond the ontological level.<sup>1</sup> Moving from ontology to theory, options within IR theory are rather limited since theoretical frameworks in International Relations usually privilege one or other plane of social activity. A relational dimension, in particular, is lacking in all major IR frameworks. This means that in terms of content of structure the debate is one of materialism versus idealism mirroring a rationalist versus constructivist debate on the individualist/holist spectrum. In chapter three it was proposed that the two aspects of conceptualizing structure should not be separated since a position on one spectrum usually implies one on the other: materialists are usually rationalists, idealists are usually constructivists. The point is that the relational dimension or plane of social activity is always in play, yet it does not feature in IR structural accounts. Anarchy as an organization principle is a form of relationships that result in limiting structural debates in IR along the idealist/materialist debate. Within the relational limits of anarchy structural debates tend to circle around distribution of material capabilities or the possibility of producing and reproducing rules of interaction among the “still like units”. The Neo-realist/Neoliberal can indeed be understood in such terms where both frameworks accept anarchy as organizing principle and relational context, but neoliberals suggest a minimal space for ideas and causal effects on the behaviour of units despite the pressure towards adopting a realist reason of the state which is a product of anarchy and distribution of material capabilities. On the idealist side, an exceptional work is Wendt’s three cultures of anarchy where the meaning of anarchy or more accurately the environment of anarchy can be transformed. Basing his work, partly, on Giddens’ overly focus on rules. Wendt, however, does not explore thoroughly the relational dimension of structure. This means that at first instance it is expected that we might have a number of empty boxes at the international level as articulated in the proposed version of

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Millennium’s forum on “Scientific and Critical Realism in International Relations”, Vol. 35, No. 2 (March 2007) where the focus of discussions remain mainly ontological.



analysis in chapter four. If the choice is to apply a neorealist framework to the international level then the relational and ideational “boxes” remain empty, and hence *Tawhid* and *Tazkiyah* cannot be operationalized. If we choose a constructivist or English School one, then the material box, and likely the relational one, will also be empty, this time losing a space to express *Tawhid* and *Omran*.

Instead, given the ontological discussions in the first part of this thesis, the multi-dimensional conceptualization of structure with the centrality of the relational plane can contribute to richer debates on structures in IR theory by suggesting different forms of differentiation among agents that is based on their positions and the social roles they perform on the relational plane of social activity as will be demonstrated later in this chapter. What adds complexity to the discussions in this chapter, however, is the need for a vertical move, one that gives structural contents human micro flavour. Remember that taking *Estekhlaf* to the borders of the international level was an analytical effort that might allow the application of its pillars at macro levels but does not change its core substance as a mission explaining human role (Khalifah) and pursuits (Tawhid, Tazkiyah, and Omran). Again western IR theoretical frameworks suffer from poverty in embedding macro ideational structures in human micro level.

Within the overall framework of this thesis, the task for this chapter then is twofold, first, is to populate the relational, ideational, and material planes of social activity with structural contents and forge links among them, and second, to give macro structures micro expressions. The latter is best served by finding a counterpart to the *Khalifah*, an understanding of human agency, role, needs, and pursuits that can be shown to underlie the macro structures of international relations and institutional design therein. While the former, given the lack of theoretical frameworks that can satisfy it, can best be served by the same strategy that was used in chapter four when

discussing Wendt's notions on state agency, that is, choosing a theoretical framework as a platform and then shed light on its blind spots. The basic text that this chapter will work with is Reus-Smit's *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations*. Choosing a work that falls somewhere between English School Theory and constructivism means that, in terms of the horizontal coverage of planes of social activity, the chapter has set for itself the challenge of reviving the material and relational planes of social activity. In terms of spotting a counter human expression to the *Khalifah*, the author does most of the work through his notion of "individual rights" or "the modern individual".

To these ends, the first Section will briefly introduce Reus-Smit's framework, singling out three elements that are said to constitute the constitutional structure that underpins the fundamental institutions of the modern international society (multilateralism, contractual international law) namely: a hegemonic moral purpose of the state associated with augmentation of individual's purposes and potentialities, sovereignty as an organizing principle, and norms of pure procedural justice. The strategy for this chapter will be one of engagement with each of these elements to demonstrate that the modern international society, as any social arrangement, needs material and relational planes of social activity in order to be better ontologically presented. In other words, the intermediate aim is to give a critical realist reading of Reus-Smit's "modern international society" that features idealist/inter-subjective, relational, and material planes of social activity, while the final aim is to locate it on the field of *Estekhlaf* as a man-made social arrangement that can be assessed according to the relational configuration among the pillars of the mission of *Estekhlaf: Tawhid, Tazkiyah, and Omran*.

Once the three mentioned elements of Reus-Smit's framework are singled out for this treatment the second section will start with the first of them, namely, the hegemonic moral purpose of the state as associated with the augmentation of individual's purposes and potentialities especially in the economic realm.<sup>2</sup> This element in particular will serve two purposes: one concerning the vertical move of embedding the macro institutions of the modern international society in micro human meanings that can serve as counterparts of meanings of *Estekhlaf* as human pursuit, and the other concerning the horizontal move of reviving the material plane of social activity of the modern international society.

The third section will work with sovereignty as an organizing principle to highlight the relational plane of social activity by emphasizing its stratificatory, rather than segmentary, mode of differentiation which results in objective relationships of status and ranks among members of international society, which in turn need a relational plane of social activity in order to be reflected.

The final section will engage with Reus-Smit's third element, that is, norms of pure procedural justice to show that the fundamental institutions of the modern international society, multilateralism and contractual international law, do not float on normative complex as articulated by his framework but, rather, are infiltrated by "institutional power" dynamics, that are in turn based on "structural power" and "productive power" dynamics that are balanced and conditioned by the degree of adopting the hegemonic moral purpose of the state associated with augmentation of individual's purposes and potentialities as understood by "individualism", and liberal standards of sovereignty as developed in western societies.

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<sup>2</sup> Christian Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, And Institutional Rationality in International Relations* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997) P. 9.

Despite the apparent complexity of this alternative reading of the modern international society, the chapter will conclude by claiming that it sets the stage for more accurate reading of the socialization experience of Islamic agents who do not adopt the modern understanding of human purposes and potentialities, and further gives more accurate context for this tension at the international level by emphasizing the idealist, relational, and material dimensions of this tension which commences at the micro level.

***The Modern International Society: From Normative Complex to Planes of Social Activity:***

In *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations* Reus-Smit aims at explaining the variation of institutional design between societies of states through a historically informed constructivist theory of fundamental institutional structure.<sup>3</sup> To achieve this, he draws on insights from constructivist international theory, linking what he calls “fundamental institutions” to inter-subjective beliefs about legitimate statehood and rightful state action. He offers insightful comparative analysis of institutional development in four societies of states: the ancient Greek, the Renaissance Italian, the absolutist European, and the modern international society.<sup>4</sup> Clearly the scope of his study is wider than the aim of this chapter since it is only the latter, namely the modern international society, that is of interest here. With this in mind, Reus-Smit’s analytical framework features three institutional levels that according to him explain institutional design in every society of states, the first and deepest level is a constitutional structure, which he defines as a normative complex hosting ensembles of inter-subjective beliefs, principles, and norms that perform two functions in ordering international societies: they define what constitutes a legitimate actor, entitled to all the rights and privileges of statehood, and they define the basic parameters of

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<sup>3</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.2.

<sup>4</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.6.

rightful state action.<sup>5</sup> According to him, these norms, principles, and inter-subjective beliefs are “constitutional” because they incorporate the basic principles that define and shape international politics, and “structural” because “they limit and mold agents and agencies and point them in ways that tend toward a common quality of outcomes even though the efforts and aims of agents and agencies vary.”<sup>6</sup> More specifically, these constitutional structures incorporate three normative elements: a hegemonic belief about the moral purpose of centralized, autonomous political organization, an organizing principle of sovereignty, and a norm of pure procedural justice.<sup>7</sup>

Reus-Smit emphasizes the point that the hegemonic belief about the moral purpose of the state represents the core of this normative complex, providing the justificatory foundations for the principle of sovereignty and the prevailing norm of pure procedural justice.<sup>8</sup> He explains further that the term “purpose” refers to the reasons that historical agents hold for organizing their political life into centralized, autonomous, political units. Such purposes are “moral” because they always entail a conception of the individual or social “good” served by autonomous political organization. Finally, the beliefs about moral purpose of the state that shape constitutional structure are “hegemonic”, not because they are the only conceptions of the moral purpose of the state propagated in a given historical context, but because they constitute the prevailing socially sanctioned justification for sovereign rights in a given society of states<sup>9</sup>.

Sovereignty, in turn, is an organizing principle that establishes the basis on which the constituent units are separated from one another. In societies of states, the organizing principle of

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<sup>5</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.30.

<sup>6</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.30.

<sup>7</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.31.

<sup>8</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.30.

<sup>9</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.31.

sovereignty differentiates political units on the basis of particularity and exclusivity, creating a system of territoriality demarcated, autonomous centres of political authority.<sup>10</sup> In his reading, the moral purpose of the state is more basic than sovereignty because, he explains, historically, contingent beliefs about the moral purpose of the state have provided the justificatory foundations of sovereign rights, and as these beliefs have changed from one society of state to another, so too have meanings attached to sovereignty.<sup>11</sup>

The third element in this normative complex is a norm of pure procedural justice, which he defines as the correct procedures that “legitimate” or “good” states employ, internally and externally, to formulate basic rules of internal and external conduct. They do not prescribe substantive principles of interstate justice, they simply dictate “a correct or fair procedure such that the outcomes is likewise correct or fair, whatever it is, providing the procedure has been properly followed.”<sup>12</sup>

Together, as enforcing elements of the constitutional structure of a given society of states, these normative elements give rise to the next institutional level: fundamental institutions, which he defines as the elementary rules of practice that states formulate to solve the coordination and collaboration problems associated with coexistence under anarchy.<sup>13</sup> Fundamental institutions are the result of constitutional structures, for example, the constitutional structure of the ancient Greek society of states featured cultivation of *Bios Politikos* as the moral purpose of the state, democratic sovereignty as an organizing principle, and discursive justice as the norm of procedural justice, together they gave rise to the fundamental institutions of interstate Arbitration, while Renaissance Italy with a moral purpose of the state understood as pursuit of

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<sup>10</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.31.

<sup>11</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.31.

<sup>12</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.33.

<sup>13</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.14.

civic glory, patronal sovereignty, and ritual justice, gave rise to oratorical diplomacy as the fundamental institution. In this context, the modern international society, which is what is at stake here, is assigned by Reus-Smit a moral purpose of the state that is associated with augmentation of individual's purposes and potentialities, which in turn gives justificatory reasons for organizing political "life" according to liberal standards of sovereign rights, and pure norms of procedural justice in the form of legislative justice. Together, they gave rise to the fundamental institutions of contractual international law and multilateralism. The third institutional level in Reus-Smit's framework is issue-specific regimes (GATT, NPT, etc.). Which he gives the least attention to, an expected choice for a historically informed and theoretical work trying to cover four societies of states.

He then applies this framework to different societies of states, in order to explain the variations in their institutional structures. On the institutional structure of the modern international society, the focus is on how "augmentation of individual's purposes and potentialities has come to constitute the moral purpose of the modern state, which in turn resulted in relocating sovereignty to the "nation" and produced a norm of procedural justice, that insists on two principles: first, that only those subject to the rules have the right to define them, and, second, that the rules of society must apply equally to all citizens.<sup>14</sup> He then, offers a historical account of how these three elements have come to constitute the constitutional structure of the modern international society and give rise to both contractual international law and multilateralism as fundamental institutions of contemporary international politics, replacing natural international law and "old diplomacy".<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.129.

<sup>15</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p. 122-154.

With respect to the aims of this chapter, two points can be realized from the short introduction of Reus-Smit's arguments; first, structure, although stratified, appears as only normative, made up of norms, principles, and shared or hegemonic beliefs. In Reus-Smit's framework, social relations and material interaction do not exist or are downgraded to the level of processes. Second, the macro-micro links are clear and well established; they run from the hegemonic belief about the moral purpose of the state at the international level, to the moral purpose of individual states, at the state level, which in turn is associated with augmentation of individual's purposes and potentialities, in effect linking moral assessment at the international level to serving purposes and potentialities of individuals through the moral purpose of the state. What Reus-Smit offers is a parallel to *Estekhlaf* which can be understood as the moral purpose of the Islamic state in terms of serving the purposes and potentialities of individuals understood as *Kholafa'* (plural of Khalifah). Yet, this Islamic understanding of the purposes and potentialities of individuals never achieved a hegemonic status in order to constitute the hegemonic belief of the moral purpose of the state at the international level, at least in modern times. It is a different understanding of purposes and potentialities of individuals that constitutes the core of the constitutional structure of the modern international society. The merit of Reus-Smit's work, at this stage, is that despite the discussion already starting to touch upon the international level, arguments and normative claims can still be sustained in terms of meanings and understandings of human purposes and potentialities instead of the narrow space offered by alternative frameworks that commence at the state level. Unfortunately, however, within Reus-Smit's framework this micro-macro path that commences at the individual level is only normative, meaning that there is no space for social relations and material pursuits where the links between understanding of human nature and needs on the one hand and between the macro structures of the modern international society



on the other can better be assessed. The remainder of this chapter will first explore certain modern understandings of the “individual” and his/her purposes and potentialities, the serving of which define or constitute not only the moral purpose of individual states, but also the core structural element of a hegemonic understanding of the moral purpose of the state. In other words, it is an effort to “get to know” who is this individual, the counterpart to the *Khalifah*, who has constructed the modern international society to serve his needs and potentialities. Second, once we have a clearer picture of this individual, an engagement with Reus-Smit’s three elements of constitutional structure, namely, the hegemonic moral purpose of the state, sovereignty, and norms of pure procedural justice, will bring to life the material and relational dimensions of structures of the modern international society. Once brought into light, together, the contents of the three planes of social activity will be shown to suggest a certain relational configuration that defines the structure of contemporary international relations.

### ***Micro Roots and material base: Reviving the Material Plane of the Modern International Society***

Reus-Smit starts the “story” of the modern international society by emphasizing that “Since the late eighteenth century the moral purpose of the modern state has become increasingly identified with the augmentation of individuals’ purposes and potentialities, especially in the economic realm”. Moreover, he acknowledges that individualism in political thought was accompanied by individualist thought in other areas, especially the economic one. Citing Adam Smith and others, he states that “Individuals’ social roles, they argued, were not determined by convention or the will of God, nor with their relationships with others. Humans were portrayed as restless,

acquisitive, and competitive”.<sup>16</sup> Commenting on David Kolb’s notion on the modern individual as a unified core, perceiving, choosing, and being potentially free to maximize whatever is desired, Reus-Smit insists that “certain primary and substantive interests- principally economic maximization and technological progress- were smuggled into the new accounts of human nature.”<sup>17</sup>

In later works, however, Reus-Smit tries to lighten the material presentation of modern understanding of human nature and needs.<sup>18</sup> Remember that his aim is to preserve a purely normative route all the way from the individual within the state-society complex to fundamental institutions of multilateralism and contractual international law at the international level where emphasizing the material roots of individualism can only complicate this effort. Given that the modern international society is built by the modern individual, or based on an understanding of human nature and needs through modernity’s understanding of the individual, what is needed is clearer presentation of the material base of the “modern individual” which is provided by Margaret Archer. In *Being Human*, she traces the development of modernity’s understanding of human nature through the notion of “Modernity’s man” which she, interestingly, portrays as the “Clint Eastwood of the Eighteenth century. The lone stranger who walked tall through the townships of the western world: The man from nowhere who arrived on the scene, ready-made imposed the order which he taciturnity deemed justified, and strode off into the sunset, unchanged by his encounter”.<sup>19</sup> She elaborates, “The major question about this stranger was why he should have any concern, however temporary, for the well-being of others who were never

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<sup>16</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.124.

<sup>17</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.126.

<sup>18</sup> See for example, Christian Reus-Smit, “The Struggle for Individual Rights and the Expansion of the International System”, *International Organization*, Vol. 65, Issue 2, (April 2011) pp 207-242.

<sup>19</sup> Margaret Archer, *Being Human: The problem of Agency*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004) p.51

discovered to be constitutive of himself?”<sup>20</sup> Then she moves to “Enlightenment’s man” who did not disagree entirely with the modern sentiment, only had to be a “good deal more accurate in supplying reasons for his political and moral actions.”<sup>21</sup> Although, according to her, reason here operated as the slave of the passions,<sup>22</sup> where the job description of this slave is to ensure that the means chosen for satisfying a lower passion are carefully selected to prevent them from preempting the satisfaction of higher one.<sup>23</sup> Then comes “Economic Man” who never pays more than he needs, and never settles for less satisfaction that he can get. The world through which he moves is the global market place, in which everything, unless it be desire itself, is open to negotiated exchange.<sup>24</sup>

At first instance, it might seem that Archer’s description of modernity’s understanding of human nature and needs is very similar to that of Reus-Smit’s, only that she uses more hostile language. To be sure, the material base of human needs and lack of any role played by social relations in defining those human needs and roles is well documented by Reus-Smit, only that they vanish once assigned as a moral purpose of the state and by extension a hegemonic moral purpose of the state. On the other hand, the way these two points are presented through Archer’s account seems to point to their implications for the structural configurations of international relations. Instead of taming the material base of human needs by using neutral phrases like “individual rights” and “individual purposes and potentialities” as in Reus Smit’s work, she highlights a hierarchal relationship between desire/passion (material needs) and reason (ideas) when she states that “reason operated as the slave of the passions, where the job description of this slave is to ensure

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<sup>20</sup> Archer, *Being Human*, p.51.

<sup>21</sup> Archer, *Being Human*, p.51.

<sup>22</sup> Archer, *Being Human*, p.52.

<sup>23</sup> Archer, *Being Human*, p.53.

<sup>24</sup> Archer, *Being Human*, p.53.

that the means chosen for satisfying a lower passion are carefully selected to prevent them from pre-empting the satisfaction of higher one.” When moving up from the implications of this relationship between desire/passion and reason at the level of individual action to higher levels of social action underlined by shared knowledge and institutional arrangements, the argument is that this relationship still holds, that is, ideational or inter-subjective dimension of structure still serves the submissive “job description” of justifying material needs. In these terms, multilateralism and contractual international law do not float on a purely normative complex but are underlined by relationship between ideas, norms, and rules on the one hand, and material interests on the other. The same relationship can be traced all the way to the micro level of the individual, those norms, rules, and ideas might even have the same “job description” of operating as a “slave of the passions” of some agents, those agents who have constructed the modern international society and its institutions. To use a real world example; TRIPS, the trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights, is an international institutional arrangement of multilateralism that is in a relationship to material transactions and pursuits. It is well known fact that many people around the world experience difficulties in receiving needed medications because of this institutional arrangement that Reus-Smit’s framework would represent as based on purely normative complex. The reason is that his framework lacks the material dimension that can capture this sad outcome. Although his description of the material base of the “Modern Individual”, and by extension, the moral purpose of the state, suggests this outcome. Had he brought this material base on board to the international level along with multilateralism and contractual international law, the institutional arrangement of TRIPS would have been more accurately analyzed.

What the discussion above suggests is that the modern international society, unlike Jackson's arguments presented in chapter two, is not a closed normative system but is based on micro assumptions about human nature and needs that give rise to moral justifications on the state and international levels. "The Modern Individual" provides the micro assumptions of institutional design of the modern international society, and the two are linked through the moral purpose of the modern state. If the modern conception of the individual puts passion/desire before reason, then the same hierarchal relationship exists in macro social arrangements that are constructed by the modern individual including the modern international society, only that its macro applications require this hierarchal relationship to be between shared planes of social activity, specifically between the idealist/inter-subjective plane and the material plane. In short, because modernity's understanding of the individual puts material needs over reason, so modernity's understanding of international society puts material interests and pursuits over ideas and norms. Again, Reus-Smit clearly points to the material needs of human nature at the individual level; his conceptualization of structure at the international level, however, does not include a material dimension and thus this relationship cannot be fully expressed at the international level.

Recalling the proposed version of levels of analysis which is our ontological guide in this chapter, and accordingly trying to place Reus-Smit's fundamental institutions on the international level that features idealist, relational, and material planes of social activity, it is apparent that they can only cover the idealist/inter-subjective plane of social activity. The above discussion was an attempt at ontological correction by shedding light on the material plane of social activity. At this stage, institutional arrangements of the modern international society are not underlined by only the norms and rules within the idealist/inter-subjective plane of social activity but also feature links between this plane of social activity and the material plane of social

activity. Although this fits Wight's conceptualization of structure as links between planes of social activity and thus is based on ontological principles, those links are hierarchal, in the sense that material transaction, pursuits, and needs condition meanings and ideas, and norms: it is the material conditioning the ideal. There is nothing inevitable, however, when it comes to this hierarchal relationship of one plane over the other. It is an institutional choice; in the case of the modern international society, the hegemonic choice is to produce and reproduce this balance that gives the material plane the upper hand in constituting the inter-subjective plane. This point will prove important when the time of socialization of Islamic agents comes, one that must feature a comparison between the relational configuration of the mission of *Estekhlaf* where *Tazkiyah* (norms and rules of moral purification) conditions material pursuits (Omran).

At this stage, the material plane of social activity is revived and linked to the idealist/inter-subjective plane, which is an important step in mapping the structure of the modern international society onto the ontological landscape introduced in previous chapters. We can also trace the form of these links to the micro level of understanding of human nature and needs. In order to offer a proper socialization context for the *Khalifah*, the modern international society should reveal its relational plane of social activity.

### ***Sovereignty as a Mode of Differentiation: Reviving the Relational Plane of the Modern International Society***

The previous section aimed at reviving the material plane of social activity and its links with the idealist/inter-subjective plane of social activity that together, partly, underlie the modern international society. According to the ontological discussions in the previous chapters, as a man-made social arrangement constructed on the field of *Estekhlaf*, the modern international society must also feature a relational plane of social activity. While the previous section engaged

with the hegemonic moral purpose of the state and its micro roots to shed light on the material plane of social activity, this section engages with the second element in Reus-Smit's constitutional structure, namely, sovereignty, in order to shed light on the relational plane of the modern international society.

Reus-Smit offers a rather standard understanding of sovereignty as an organizing principle, no more or no less.<sup>25</sup> Quoting Ruggie, he views it as the principles that establish the basis on “which constituent units are separated from one another”,<sup>26</sup> and that the principles of sovereignty define the mode of differentiation.<sup>27</sup> He, rightly, attaches liberal meanings to sovereignty when analyzing the constitutional structure of the modern international society. Although just like with the materialist base of individual needs and the hegemonic moral purpose of the state, the potential for liberal meanings and principles attached to sovereignty to highlight a relational dimension of the modern international society based on wider possibilities for modes of differentiation is not realized. This what this section intends to achieve, that is, to give sovereignty a clearer relational quality through widening possibilities of modes of differentiation between “political units”. First however, we, briefly, need to visit those liberal meanings of sovereignty.

One cannot help but notice, interestingly, in Reus-Smit's comparative analysis of different societies of states, that the modern international society comes right after the society of states of Absolutist Europe, which while a historical and substantive fact, does serve the analytical effort in this chapter. So what appears as substantive in Reus-Smit's work, specifically, the modern

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<sup>25</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.159.

<sup>26</sup> John Ruggie, “Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist synthesis”, *World Politics* Vol. 35, No. 2, (January 1983) p. 274.

<sup>27</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p. 32.

individual and by extension national interest “winning” sovereignty from God’s will,<sup>28</sup> is analytical in this discussion. For Reus-Smit, the point is substantive because “it just happens” that it was God’s will that was competing for sovereignty when the purposes and potentialities of the “modern individual” came to define the moral purpose of the state and justification for sovereign rights, yet, given the aim of this project, this relationship is at the heart of this analysis. On a side note, this, however, does not need to place Islamic meanings of sovereignty in the same camp with those of Absolutist Europe. Although the two being “religious”, the Islamic view does not prophesize ruling the state, to put it in Reus-Smit’s words, according to God’s will, but according to God’s guidelines. Moreover, while he attaches the “maintenance of divinely ordained social order” as a moral justification for sovereign rights to the Absolutist European system, he assigns championing and protecting individual freedoms to sovereign rights of the modern state. Again, the Islamic justification for sovereign rights does not, neatly, fit either of these two extremes. As demonstrated in chapter four, political Estekhلاف, while targeting the legal and institutional framework of the state and subsequently social order, is rooted in understanding of the “individual” as a *Khalifah* of *Allah* (SWT) on earth, the issue then is not one to be tackled along the individualist/holist spectrum as Reus-Smit does when illuminating differences of standards for sovereign rights between Absolutism in Europe and the modern order. Rather, the issue can be understood as one of competing visions of defining individualism. After all, at what might be described as a late stage of modernity, the western understanding of the “individual” could be viewed as holist, where the moral purpose of the modern state could be viewed in holist terms as the “maintenance of secular materialist based social order”, while many “individuals”, especially those living in Muslim societies, might freely choose to realize their potentialities and purposes in Islamic terms, and institutionalize governments accordingly.

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<sup>28</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p. 129.



As is the case with the hegemonic moral purpose of the state, meanings attached to sovereignty, although an international structural content can still be traced to the individual level. If the modern emphasis on the material needs of the individual is the micro basis for the hegemonic moral purpose of the state in the modern international society, then, according to Reus-Smit's presentation, championing individual freedoms versus maintaining God-ordained social order, or simply liberal standards of sovereignty, seem to cover a considerable micro basis for shared justification of sovereign rights on the macro level of the modern international society. An interesting piece written by Alexander Wendt and Raymond Duvall can support this view. In *Sovereignty and UFOs* they make the point clearly with frequent references to the disputing of sovereignty between human beings and God. Their opening paragraph demonstrates the point most clearly: "Few ideas today are as contested as sovereignty, in theory or in practice. In sovereignty theory scholars disagree about almost everything-what sovereignty is and where it resides, how it relates to law, whether it is divisible, how its subjects and objects are constituted, and whether it is being transformed in later modernity...Throughout this contestation, however, one thing is taken for granted: sovereignty is the province of humans alone."<sup>29</sup> They elaborate further, "When sovereignty is contested today, therefore, it is always and only among humans, horizontally so to speak, rather than vertically with nature or God."<sup>30</sup> They believe that this is to be viewed as a metaphysical achievement since it is in anthropocentric terms that humans today understand their place in the physical world.<sup>31</sup> They admit however, that in some areas this metaphysics is contested, especially by creationists, yet, these challenges, according to them do not threaten the principle that sovereignty, the capacity to decide the norm and exceptions to it,

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<sup>29</sup> Raymond Duvall and Alexander Wendt, "Sovereignty and the UFO", *Political Theory*, Vol. 36, No.4, (August 2008) pp: 607-633.

<sup>30</sup> Duvall and Wendt, *Sovereignty and the UFO*, p. 608

<sup>31</sup> Duvall and Wendt, *Sovereignty and the UFO*, p. 608.

must necessarily be human.<sup>32</sup> Clearly, this take on sovereignty is in opposition to *Estekhlaf* as ontology and by extension to political *Estekhlaf* as an institutionalized expression of both the moral purpose of the Islamic state and sovereign rights. From *Estekhlaf* point of view, this is nothing more than “cutting links” of endowment between human agency and *Allah* (SWT), from a political *Estekhlaf* point of view it removes *Allah* (SWT) from the chain of authorization and accountability with the state-society complex. As Wendt and Duvall put it, the vertical links of sovereignty are no longer acknowledged in modern meanings attached to sovereignty.

*Sovereignty as a Stratificatory Mode of Differentiation:*

The discussion above showed that part of the celebratory mode of liberal sovereignty is sustained through viewing it as a metaphysical achievement, an achievement of “winning” sovereignty from God. The argument, however, is that Reus-Smit fails to take account of the fact that this celebratory mode, let alone the metaphysical achievement of anthropocentric sovereignty is not shared all over the world. Other state-society complexes may not even view it as an achievement at all; on the contrary, they might exert every individual, collective, and corporate effort to steer away from it. It is this assumption of shared celebration of liberal sovereignty that let Reus-Smit take sovereignty, although normatively rich with meanings, to serve as static organizational principle and mode of differentiation. In this respect, his intentions were clear from the start by pointing out that the constitutional structure of the modern international society, where sovereignty is an element, is constitutional in the sense of limiting and molding agents and agencies and point them in ways that tend toward a common quality of outcomes even though the efforts and aims of agents and agencies vary.” Which resembles a Waltzian conception of structure, although a normative one. It is expected then that Reus-Smit follows the same path and

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<sup>32</sup> Duvall and Wendt, *Sovereignty and the UFO*, p. 609.

views states as “like-units” only separated and organized through sovereignty as a mode of differentiation.

Accordingly, Reus-Smit offers sovereignty as a static mode of differentiation and fixed ordering principle. Yet the way he links sovereignty to the “liberal standards” and the moral purpose of the state of championing individual freedom suggests that respecting sovereign rights is conditioned by acceptance and internalization of those standards. In turn, creating a dynamic mode of differentiation between members of the international society. In this reading, sovereignty although a shared knowledge occupying part of the inter-subjective plane of social activity that separates political units of also produces a relational pattern of ranks and status among state-society complexes.

Just like Waltz drops functional differentiation from his analysis, because the ordering principle of the system forces all states to carry out the same functions,<sup>33</sup> Reus-Smit drops what Barry Buzan and Mathias Albert call stratificatory differentiation from his analysis. To clarify the point, this discussion will briefly visit their work on differentiation drawn from both sociology and anthropology.<sup>34</sup> Buzan and Albert introduce three forms of differentiation; “segmentary”, “stratificatory”, and “functional”. Segmentary differentiation is where every social subsystem is the equal of, and functionally similar to, every other social subsystem. In IR, segmentary differentiation points to anarchic systems of states as “like-units”.<sup>35</sup> Stratificatory differentiation is where some persons or groups raise themselves above others, creating a hierarchal social order. Stratificatory differentiation can cover a wide range of possibilities and can be further

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<sup>33</sup> Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and understanding International Relations*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991) p.109.

<sup>34</sup> Barry Buzan and Mathias Albert “Differentiation: A Sociological Approach to International Relations Theory”, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 16, No. 3, (September 2010) p. 317.

<sup>35</sup> Albert and Buzan, *Differentiation*, p 318.

subdivided into ranks and class distinguished by whether or not there is significant inequality not just in status (rank), but also in access to basic resources (class). Buzan and Albert explain that stratification can occur in many dimensions: coercive capabilities, access to resources, and authority status. In IR it points to the many forms of hierarchy; conquest and empire, hegemony, a privileged position for great powers, and a division of the world into core and periphery or first and third worlds.<sup>36</sup> Finally, functional differentiation is where the subsystems are defined by coherence of particular types of activity and their differentiation from other types of activity.<sup>37</sup>

Although liberal sovereignty might not go as far as allowing a functional differentiation, it certainly goes further than a segmentary differentiation that results in “like-members of the international society”. Instead it offers a stratificatory mode of differentiation among members of the modern international society. Sovereignty seems to generate an objective set of relationships among members of international society that have existence beyond ideas, norms and rules. Wight gives the example of Capitalism, as a set of rules and norms that belong to the inter-subjective plane of social activity, but results in a relational pattern of inequality. Likewise sovereignty is a set of principles that belong to the inter-subjective plane of social activity of the modern international society, but generates relationships of hierarchy and domination among members of the modern international society. These relationships need a relational plane to be expressed, which is not provided by Reus-Smit’s normative complex that underlies the modern international society. In this regard, one cannot overlook the resemblance of language between Buzan and Albert’s stratificatory differentiation and Bhaskar’s articulation of the relational plane of social activity, where both emphasize rank, status, and class relations among agents only that

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<sup>36</sup> Albert and Buzan, *Differentiation*, p. 318.

<sup>37</sup> Albert and Buzan, *Differentiation*, p. 318.

Bhaskar more clearly emphasizes the point that these patterns of relationships are among social roles embodied and filled by agents.

According to Wight's conceptualization of structure as links between different planes of social activity which was given pictorial expression in the proposed version of levels of analysis in chapter four, Reus-Smit leaves out another empty box, that is, the relational plane of social activity. Had he traced the relational patterns that resulted from forcing liberal standards of sovereignty as developed in western historical and cultural experiences to be a mode of differentiation of the modern international society, not only would the relational plane of social activity have revealed itself but also its links to the inter-subjective plane of social activity.

This, along with the discussion in section one, suggests a different image of the modern international society. At Reus-Smit's level of constitutional structure, or normative complex, it was demonstrated that the first element, the hegemonic moral purpose of the state, is linked to material pursuits and transactions (material plane of social activity), while the second element, sovereignty, is linked to a set of objective relationships of ranks and status (relational plane of social activity). The ontological intervention, inspired by the critical realism of Wight and Bhaskar, demonstrated that the deep structure of the modern international society is more than Reus-Smit's normative elements, but as any social arrangement, its structure is the links between those normative elements and material transactions and pursuits on the one hand, and the relations of rank and status on the other.

This ontological intervention is a means to give the socialization experience of the Islamic agents more accuracy. It offers Islamic agents the opportunity to make claims about human purposes and needs on the international level where Islamic and religious faiths have long traditions, and second, and this is more specific to *Estekhlaf*, to debate the relational configurations of the

modern international society as a social arrangement. This ontological intervention aims at presenting the modern international society as a social arrangement that is based on an alternative configuration of planes of social activity, one that is not in harmony with the mission of *Estekhlaf*. Moving along with Reus-Smit's framework, capturing the socialization experience of Islamic agents in international relations would have taken place under fundamental institutions of multilateralism and contractual international law, and issue-specific regimes as normatively neutral institutional arrangements unconditioned by material interests and relationships of hierarchy. This is far from what Islamic agents face in the modern international society. Yet, it resembles a "real world" difficulty for non-western agents who are "invited" to socialize under multilateralism and contractual international law without being given the opportunity to challenge the deeper elements of the hegemonic moral purpose of the state or the liberal standards of sovereignty.

To understand how the specific configuration of modern international society in linking different planes of social activity gives rise to a different institutional context than the one defined by Reus-Smit's fundamental institutions, the next section engages with the third element in Reus-Smit's normative complex, norms of pure procedural justice.

### ***Norms of "Impure" Procedural Justice and the Powers of the "Modern Individual"***

Reus-Smits defines norms of pure procedural justice as the correct procedures that "legitimate" or "good" states employ, internally and externally, to formulate basic rules of internal and external conduct. Those norms do not prescribe substantive principles of interstate justice, but simply dictate correct or fair procedures such that the outcome is likewise correct or fair.<sup>38</sup> Just like the other two elements of the normative complex, he traces their roots to the Western

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<sup>38</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.32.

experience, specifically to legislative justice and its principles of rule determination: first, the principle that only those subject to the rules have the right to define them and, second, that the rules of society must apply equally to all citizens.<sup>39</sup> Over time, these principles established a distinctly modern international institutional architecture. The precept that social rules should be authored by those subject to them came to license multilateral forms of rule determination in the modern international society, while the precept that rules should be equally applicable to all subjects, in all like cases, warranted the formal codification of contractual international law.<sup>40</sup>

Against this, rather, smooth transfer of principles of pure justice from Western experience to the international level, David Lake suggests in *New Sovereignty in International Relations* that:

Reus-Smit fails to explain how the modern international order that he identifies coexisted with overseas imperialism: a parallel structure that contravened the moral purpose of the modern state. Imperialism failed to augment individual potentialities and violated the norm of procedural justice based on lawmaking by the governed; and it flourished outside the practice of contractual law and multilateralism. Reus-Smit's description of the modern international system might be correct for the handful of states that have been continuously sovereign since the early nineteenth century, but for much of the period he examines over two-thirds of humanity are ignored.<sup>41</sup>

A counter argument to Lake's critique can be made here, one that emphasizes that as international relations progressed the international principles of pure procedural justice, namely, contractual international law and multilateralism, overcame imperialism as the basic guidelines of conduct among "legitimate" states. This is a sound argument, although one look at the organizational chart of the U.N with the Security Council at the top is more than enough to prove, empirically, that still only a few "get" to determine the rules, and another look at, for example, Israel's almost institutionally unconstrained foreign policy, can easily demonstrates

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<sup>39</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.129.

<sup>40</sup> Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State*, p.133.

<sup>41</sup> David Lake, "The new Sovereignty in International Relations", *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 5, Issue. 3, (November 2003), p. 309.

that those rules do not apply equally to all members of international society. These are not exceptions but are representations of patterns of hierarchy and domination produced and reproduced institutionally. Other good examples can be found within other institutional arrangements like the WTO, IMF and World Bank where adopting neoliberal policies conditions access to resources. What these examples suggest is that the “procedures” part of the procedural justice might have advanced since imperialism, while the “justice” side has not received as much attention. Or to put it differently and to go back to Margaret Archer’s examples, the move from imperialism to contractual international law and multilateralism might resemble the “Enlightenment’s man” who did not disagree entirely with the modern sentiment, but only had to be a good deal more accurate in supplying reasons for his political and moral actions.

As mentioned before, Reus-Smit’s framework lacked the material and relational structural dimensions that put contractual international law and multilateralism in their place where defining rules, and setting the range for their application do not come detached from the ranks and status among those involved, and their effort to claim moral authority over others. In this context, power can give more substance to how contractual international law and multilateralism interact with other dimensions and planes of social activity; defining rules, specifying the range of their application, and the capacity of enforcing them are all faces of power. Power is necessarily relational; one cannot be powerful all by him/herself, power has to be tested in relation to “others”. The materially powerful requires a materially weak, the civilized requires the barbaric, the progressive needs the backward, and the liberal needs the fundamentalist. Thanks to Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, these faces of power have names: compulsory, institutional, structural, and productive, while compulsory power seems to fit imperialism as, partly, an expression of its relational power dynamics, the other three types of power seem to



play the same role for contractual international law and multilateralism. Barnett and Duvall divide types of power according to their direct/diffuse or interactive/constitutive impacts. To fit the aim of this discussion, a slight qualification is needed, that is, to arrange these types of power in stages, that is, to arrange them in away where the institutional power of a given agent cannot be realized unless structural power is consolidated, which in turn must be based on productive power. Starting from the “surface”, Barnett and Duvall define institutional power as the capacity of state, working through rules and procedures that define institutions, to guide, steer, and constrain the actions or nonactions of and conditions of existence of others.<sup>42</sup> More specifically, they emphasize institutional power as indirect or “distant” type of power. They argue that this distance is both spatial and temporal, spatial since, as they put it, State A’s actions affect the behavior or conditions of others only through institutional arrangements (such as decisional rules, formalized lines of responsibility, divisions of labor, and structures of dispersed dependence). Temporally, institutions established at one point in time can have ongoing and unintended effects at a later point. Long-standing institutions represent frozen configurations of privilege and bias that can continue to shape the future choices of actors.<sup>43</sup>

At a deeper level Barnett and Duvall define structural power as concerning the co-constitutive, internal relations of structural positions that define what kind of social beings actors are. It produces the very social capacities of structural, or subject, positions in direct relations to one another, and the associated interests that underline and dispose action.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, structural power is concerned with allocating differential capacities, and typically differential advantages to

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<sup>42</sup> Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, “Power in International Politics”, *International Organization*, Vol. 59, Issue 1, (January 2005) p. 51.

<sup>43</sup> Barnett and Duvall, *Power in International Politics*, p.52.

<sup>44</sup> Barnett and Duvall, *Power in International Politics*, p.52.

different positions. They give examples of Capital-Labour, Master-Slave relations of structures that constitute unequal social privileges and capacities.<sup>45</sup>

The deepest power dynamic is “productive power”. Although Barnett and Duvall agree that productive and structural power overlap in many respects, they maintain that productive power, can be viewed as more basic. They explain that, “While structural power is the production and reproduction of internally related positions of super and subordination, or domination that actors occupy. Productive power, by contrast, is the constitution of all social subjects with various social powers through systems of knowledge and discursive practices of broad and general social scope”.<sup>46</sup> Emphasizing discourse, they quote Hayward, who explains that the concept of discourse refers to, “how ‘microfields’ and or the quotidian define, the (im)possible, the (im)probable, the natural, the normal, what counts as a problem”.<sup>47</sup> Then they put these microfields in Foucault’s words as, “sites of social relations of power because they situate ordinary practices of life and define the social field of action”.<sup>48</sup> Arranging these faces of power according to stages seem logical since the only reason why an agent might enjoy structural power is consolidation of productive power, and then moving one level up, one can safely conclude that the only reason why an agent might enjoy institutional power is because of consolidating structural power.

This vertical presentation of power dynamics does seem similar to Reus-Smit’s vertical move from the roots of western societies to the structures of the modern international society. This similarity can help in applying these levels of power to Reus-Smit’s story of constructing and

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<sup>45</sup> Barnett and Duvall, *Power in International Politics*, p.53.

<sup>46</sup> Barnett and Duvall, *Power in International Politics*, p.55.

<sup>47</sup> Quoting Rile Hayward in “De-facing Power” (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

<sup>48</sup> Quoting Michel Foucault in “The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences” (New York: Pantheon, 1971).

designing the modern international society. One can even describe this application as the “modern individual” in action. Starting from the bottom, “individualism” and its economic, social and political expressions which were translated on a macro level to the moral purpose of the state which is associated with the satisfaction of the material needs of the individual and liberal standards of sovereignty, seem to fit smoothly as systems of knowledge and discursive practices of broad and general social scope. As mentioned before, one issue with Reus-Smith’s treatment is the assumption that all members of international society share these systems of knowledge; an assumption that allows him to further assume a segmentary differentiation among members of international society and then move to an assumption of “fairness” and neutrality of procedures of defining rules (multilateralism), and of defining the range of applying them (contractual international law). Acknowledgement, however, of the fact that production of systems of knowledge, namely “individualism” and its macro applications, is subject to a “productive power” balance between western members of international society and non-western members would have set the stage for the next level of power dynamics, that is, structural power. Of course, there are no “masters and slaves” in contemporary international relations as in the examples of social roles given by Barnett and Duvall. The fact that there is one basic social role, namely, “member of international society” might suggest absence of stratificatory differentiation, a closer look however, at real world discourse and language of international relations can reveal number of sub-social roles that although they might not occupy an adequate space in structural theorization of IR, still have a real impact on differentiating agents according to status and ranks. There are western/non-western, civilized/uncivilized, and democratic/undemocratic, etc. members of international society. These are all sub-social roles that when attached to agents, give different levels of legitimacy of actorhood, agency, respect of sovereign rights, and

subsequently balance of structural power among “members of international society”. What this means for this discussion is that those agents who have chosen to adopt liberal standards of sovereignty are allocated higher ranks, status, and differential capacities, according to their position, or more accurately, the position of the social roles they embody on the relational plane of social activity. This ensures higher capacities and power at the next level of power dynamics, that is, institutional power. That is the capacity, working through rules and procedures that define institutions, to guide, steer, and constrain the actions or nonactions of, and conditions of existence of, others. These rules and procedures that define institutions are what Reus-Smit calls “pure procedural justice” and their international application of “multilateralism” and “contractual international law”. In this context, multilateralism and contractual international law do not appear as neutral fundamental institutions of the modern international society, but as rules and procedures that define institutions through which agents who adopt liberal standards of sovereignty, (enjoying structural power) and the modern moral purpose of the state, (enjoying productive power) able to guide, steer, and constraint the actions of others. Multilateralism and contractual international law appear here as the “long standing institutions that represent frozen configurations of privilege and bias that can continue to shape the future of other actors”.<sup>49</sup>

Yet, it all starts with a choice at the micro level, the choice of how a state-society complex agrees to define human nature and needs. These connections however cannot be made clear unless the configurations that underlie multilateralism and contractual international law are clarified in the first place. And these configurations in turn cannot be expressed unless the ontological landscape that hosts them includes relational and material planes of social activity aside from the normative/idealist plane which is provided as the sole plane that underlies the fundamental

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<sup>49</sup> Barnett and Duvall, *Power in International Politics*, p. 52.

institutions of the modern international society. Only then, the socialization experience of those who choose an alternative understanding of human nature and needs like the Khalifah and subsequently alternative moral purpose of the state and alternative standards of sovereignty can be more accurately presented.

***Conclusion:***

This chapter gave a theoretical face to the ontological framework outlined in the first part of this thesis. “The modern International society” was used as the social arrangement that occupies the international level. Instead of accepting Reus-Smit’s conflation of its elements under one normative complex, however, it was shown, through a critical realist reading, that these elements tend towards a conceptualization of the structure of the social arrangement of “the modern international society” that fits Wight’s conceptualization of structure as links among different planes of social activity. The particular hegemonic moral purpose of the state of the modern international society as associated with serving economic and material needs was demonstrated to be more than an inter-subjective piece of knowledge but a hegemonic choice of conditioning “moral purpose” according to material needs and pursuits; a relationship that needs, in the first place, the revival of material dimension of structure in order to be captured. Sovereignty, conversely, was given a relational quality through the idea of stratificatory differentiation, a differentiation of ranks and status that is based on the resemblance of liberal standards attached to it. This in turn suggested the need for a relational dimension of structure that can hold these relationships of hierarchy and domination among members of the modern international society. Moreover, these two elements were shown to result from western historical experiences that transcend thinking about “the international”, but are embedded in political, economic, and social systems of knowledge about human nature, needs, and purposes, where the links between these

micro understandings and ideas about human agency with the macro arrangements of the modern international society continue to be reproduced through power relations and dynamics that stem from productive power, to structural power, and institutional power.

As promised in the introduction of this chapter the ontological landscape of the international level articulated as “boxes” and links among them resembling Wight’s conceptualization of structures are now given substance. That is, when an agent, a state-society complex at this stage, accesses the international level through the relational plane of social activity (See figure 4.3) it embodies the social role of “member of international society”. Yet, its rank and status among other members of international society, or its structural power, is conditioned by its degree of internalization of a moral purpose of the state that is associated with serving the economic and material needs of the individual and liberal standards of sovereignty.

To conclude, and to maintain an understanding of the place of this chapter in the thesis, it should be remembered that the insistence on articulating the structure of the “modern international society” through critical realism as links among inter-subjective, material, and relational planes of social activity is only a means to place it within the field of *Estekhlaf* which was shown in chapter three to be in need of all three dimensions of reality. After all, it is capturing the socialization experience of Islamic agents in international relations that this chapter sets the stage for. What this chapter did was to re-describe the modern international society in a way that allows Islamic agency to view it and assess it according to *Tawhid*, *Tazkiyah*, and *Omran*. Only through the socialization experience of Islamic agents can the reification and the static treatment of the structure of the modern international society, for the sake of clarifying the concepts, be substituted for more dynamic and on-going process of interaction. This added dynamism will involve how utilization of agential capacities that include intentional action and subsequent

moral assessment impact on the relationship between Islamic values and international norms and possibilities of internalization or rejection of international norms including the assimilation of western originated norms like self-determination, for example, and use it against the intrusion of other rounds of normative claims like the western understanding of human rights.

**Chapter Six**  
***The Islamic Socialization Experience in the Modern International Society***

Chapter five moved the discussion on structure from the ontological level to the substantive level. As we now have conceptualizations of both Islamic agency as an *Estekhlaf* based state-society complex rooted in a micro understanding of the individual role of *Khalifah*, and a conceptualization of the structure of international relations as the “modern international society” rooted in the micro understanding of the modern individual, the next logical step is to operationalize the concept of Islamic agency under the structure of the modern international society, which leads to a discussion of the third element in any image of social reality: process. The ontological discussion in chapter three introduced Bhaskar’s transformational model of social activity as a guideline for this exercise that is linking agency and structures through process, although in rather abstract terms. Just as chapter five moved the discussion on structure from the ontological to the substantive, so does this chapter do the same for process. In this respect, “socialization” will give, shape, form, and substance to these targeted processes. This is a rather popular choice in mainstream IR theory that featured in works from the not so social international system of Waltz, to Wendt’s three cultures of anarchy, and more clearly within the more normative based work in IR.<sup>1</sup> That said, the bulk of literature on socialization in western IR theory does not neatly fit with Bhaskar’s transformational model of social activity or with Islamic ontological principles on preserving certain qualities of both agency and structures.

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<sup>1</sup> See Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Boston: Addison-Wisely, 1979) P. 74-77, Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) P. 326-336, Trine Flockhart, *Complex Socialization: a Framework for the Study of State Socialization*, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 12, No.1 (March 2006) p.: 89-118., Kai Alderson, *Making Sense of State Socialization*, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 27, Issue 03 (July 2001) and Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics and Political Change*, *International Organization*, Vol. 54, No.2 (Autumn 1998).



Within this context section one will briefly review the main assumptions of socialization within IR normative work, arguing that some of these are deeply problematic and cannot contribute to a balanced account of socialization. Drawing on examples from the literature, most frequently Kai Alderson's definition of socialization as "the process whereby states internalize norms originating elsewhere in the international system",<sup>2</sup> the section will single out three problematic issues within the western literature of socialization: First is the theoretical focus on the structural level while ignoring the agential level. Instead the discussion will argue that socialization is an agential experience as much as it is a process generated "from" structure, or more accurately, a process that is experienced by agents. Second is the assumption that socialization of an agent takes place against a reified structure. Instead an argument will be made that such experience takes place against the productive, relational, and institutional powers of the "modern individual" or of the states championing this moral purpose. This results in a relational understanding of socialization that takes account of the reproduction/transformation activities of other agents, one that is, ontologically, in line with the multi-plane conceptualization of structure maintained in this thesis. These critiques will subsequently demonstrate the problematic nature of the third assumption of mainstream understanding of socialization: the assumption of inevitable internalization. Instead it will be demonstrated that once socialization is better suited to take account of properties and nature of both agency and structure internalization becomes one possibility among others.

The second section will use Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink's piece on "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change" as a platform to apply these critiques and show how rearticulating their "norm life cycle" and the associated processes and motives will result in a

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<sup>2</sup> Kai Alderson, Making Sense of State Socialization, Review of International Studies, Vol. 27, Issue 03 (July 2001) p. 417.

different path of international norms and, equally important, different possibilities of socialization according to the wider understanding of socialization offered in section one.

Section three will look into these possibilities of Islamic response to socialization and international demands and claims to internalize norms. These will include, aside from internalization: assimilation, rejection, and dissemination. The realization of this wider spectrum of possibilities, however, will be shown to depend on preservation of essential agential qualities; namely reflexivity and capacity for moral assessment which any account of socialization should give the needed space and time for their utilization. The section will argue that it is these qualities that allow Islamic agents to widen their options by reflecting on the role of *Khalifah* and its two dimensions of endowment and embodiment, and further manage them according to the mission of *Estekhlaf*.

Before the start of the discussion it should be noted that this chapter uses a high level of abstraction, which might result in misunderstanding concerning the issue of locating the right agential capacities at the right agential source. The chapter brings the totality of the Islamic state-society complex to embody or fill the social role or “structural slot” of member of international society, which inevitably results in, even temporarily, assigning capacities for action, intentionality, reflection, and moral assessment to this totality. Although defending a limited notion of collective, not corporate, intentionality and action in chapter four, the thesis still insists on the multi-layered conceptualization of Islamic agency which includes different sources of agency including causal powers of the institutional state, intentional human agents embedded within, and the ideational resources of society. This has to be bracketed for the sake of focusing on process at the international level. These sources of agency will be de-bracketed in chapter seven in order to allocate agential tasks to the right agential source.

### *The agential experience of the Process of Socialization*

In her piece, “*Complex socialization: a Framework for the study of state socialization*”, Trine Flockhart believes that the literature on socialization and transfer of norms have been mainly concerned with norms (structure) rather than with actors (agency)<sup>3</sup>, she makes clear her dissatisfaction with this popular position by stating that, “agent-level theories are particularly important for the transfer of norms as the process is located mainly at the agent level.”<sup>4</sup> This realization is important to the discussion in this chapter since it contributes to justifying a change of direction in approaching the issue from one of, “How structures of international society socialize Islamic agents?” to, “How Islamic agents socialize under structures of international society?” This change of direction, in turn, serves two points; first, is to maintain a first person perspective, which has been emphasized by the thesis from the start; and second, to stress the point that socialization of a given agent does not take place under a reified structure, but one that is influenced by the social action or socialization activities of other agents through their transformation/reproduction of structure which they all share. What this means is that capturing socialization as process through linking “one agent” to structure in the absence of the role played by other agents and their influence on this process does not reflect the realities of socialization in international relations. Together these two points suggest that socialization is not just process but also an experience, or more accurately, a process experienced by agents. Furthermore, they might even suggest that socialization has a wider meaning, one that could feature different experiences of different agents under one structure. Yet, this needs a wider understanding of socialization than the one offered by mainstream understanding. In terms of language and

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<sup>3</sup> Trine Flockhart, *Complex Socialization: a Framework for the Study of State Socialization*, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 12, No.1 (March 2006) p.: 89-118.

<sup>4</sup> Flockhart, *Complex Socialization*, p.90.

terminology, it should be noted that “socialization” as exclusively “learning rules and norms” is a western limitation on the concept. In other cultures, socialization, although lacking the western precision, might be more hospitable to wider understanding of the concept that could include agents’ interaction with society in general. This interaction might feature “teaching rules and norms” as much as it features learning them. Which captures the experience of those producing norms, inducing others to adopt them and maintaining “structural order”, as much as it captures the experience of those who are at the receiving end of normative claims made by other agents and the subsequent material and social pressure they might exert towards that end.

Within critical realism, Bhaskar offers a definition of socialization as the “process of reproduction/transformation of society, and the acquiring and maintenance of the needed skills to do so.”<sup>5</sup> Although at first glance, this formulation suggests that the two elements in this definition “reproduction/transformation of society”, and “acquiring and maintenance of the needed skills to do so” refer to different stages of socialization of one and the same agent, it could also suggest that some agents might be in the business of “reproduction/transformation of society”, while others might still be in the more primitive stage of “acquiring the needed skills to do so.” Socialization then has a relational quality as it does not take place against a reified structure but also against the transformative/reproductive capacities of other agents, usually those who make normative claims and maintain them as shared moral assessment. In terms of the ontological landscape developed in the first part of this thesis, socialization takes place on a differentiated relational plane of social activity, where each agent’s socialization experience is determined by its structural position and power.

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<sup>5</sup> Roy Bhaskar, *Possibility of Naturalism: Philosophical Critique of the Human Sciences*, 3rd edition (London: Routledge, 1998) p.36

This is not how socialization is approached in mainstream western IR theory. Even when the focus turns to agency, the way the issues are approached does not focus on the agential experience of socialization but on “flattening” agency according to the process carried from structure through the ontological structural bias of western researchers and theorists. These issues have been visited in chapter one through a discussion of Steve Smith’s critique of the discipline including the assumption of common progression of humanity towards one end-state which leads further to the assumption that any differences in worldviews or values are seen as evidence of underdevelopment, or the fact that these societies are at an earlier stage of development.<sup>6</sup> He links this critique to yet another one concerning the stress on structure over agency in International Relations Theory; where the most powerful and popular theories in the discipline are those that explain the behaviour of units, usually states, according to structures of the international system of states. Such theories compete for explanatory power by their ability to deduce the behavior of states from the system’s structures.<sup>7</sup> Keeping these critiques in mind, when discussing socialization, it becomes plausible to ask, “who prophesized this end-state? And who keeps agents on this path whenever they swerve to different “end-states”? It is not the structure of the modern international society, but the “modern individual” who holds productive/structural/institutional powers of reproducing/transforming this structure. The socialization experience of Islamic agents in the modern international society takes place against the guardians of the modern international society. For this we need a relational understanding of socialization.

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<sup>6</sup> Steve Smith, *Singing Our World into Existence: International Relations Theory and September 11th*, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 48, Issue 03 (July 2004) p.514.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, *International Relations Theory and September 11th*, p. 516.

A good example of how this bias impacted on understanding of the concept of socialization in the literature is Kai Alderson's definition of socialization, which seems to have won the status of a standard definition in the discipline. He defines socialization as the, "process by which states internalize norms originating elsewhere in the international system".<sup>8</sup> Despite the apparent focus on agency (states), a closer look can reveal two issues with this definition that are in line with Steve Smith's critique; first, structure and transfer of norms are taken for granted as the use of the phrase "elsewhere in the international system" demonstrates. For one thing, a researcher would need to know more about this "elsewhere" and its relationship to states subject to socialization before making the assumption of internalization. His formulation does not suggest under-theorizing of structures, on the contrary, it suggest that structures, processes originating from therein and their impact on agential socialization experience are not up for problematization, they are "done" arguments, ontologically, and even "morally" when applicable. Second is the assumption of internalization as an outcome of socialization, which is more clearly in line with the idea of common progression of humanity towards one end state. Moreover, Alderson seems to conflate socialization and internalization, for him, internalization is not the outcome of socialization, but socialization is internalization of norms.<sup>9</sup> He even takes pride in such formulation arguing that it offers a much-needed focal point around which various perspectives on state socialization can coalesce.<sup>10</sup> This cannot be helpful to approaching socialization of Islamic agency in the modern international society, which emphasizes the uniqueness of Islamic socialization experience. Neither does it "fit" with Bhaskar's transformational model of social activity stressing the authenticity or essence of the "self" which is separated from the social role that it embodies in the social structure.

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<sup>8</sup> Alderson, *Making Sense of State Socialization*, p. 417.

<sup>9</sup> Alderson, *Making Sense of State Socialization*, p. 417.

<sup>10</sup> Alderson, *Making Sense of State Socialization*, p. 417.

Emphasizing the uniqueness of agential socialization experience mirrors an emphasis on a wider range of socialization outcomes; at the end of the day saying, “Thank you, but I believe that these norms do not fit with our understanding of progress, harmful to labor rights, or deconstructive to our family values” is still a decent outcome of socialization that should not be omitted in the name of inevitable internalization of “norms originating elsewhere in the international system”. For example, the family is viewed in the Muslim society as the basic socialization unit for human agents where they first learn about values and morals. Accordingly, issues like abortion and gay marriage are seen to be harmful to this most basic socialization unit in society, the assumption that such issues will be automatically internalized is not wise to say the least.

The wider possibilities of socialization outcome can also be argued for, ontologically, not just morally. When an agent embodies or fills the social role of “member of international society”, its socialization experience features an interaction between the meanings, ideas and moral guidelines it brings to this role, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the structural normative and inter-subjective guidelines that wrap this role, namely, as argued in chapter five the hegemonic moral purpose of the state and liberal standards of sovereignty. The resultant possibilities of this interaction are clearly wider than internalization can cover; instead there are many possibilities that include rejection and subsequent resistance to both the moral purpose of the modern state and liberal standards of sovereignty.

Political *Estekhlaf* as legal and institutional framework, which preserves the meanings of human agency as *Khalifah* of *Allah* (SWT) on earth is sure to shape a unique socialization experience for the Islamic state-society complex when embodying the social role of member of international society. What is needed is a more accurate and comprehensive account of socialization that can

carry the weight and possibilities of the interaction between the “modern individual” and the “Khalifah”, or the moral purpose of the modern state and liberal standards of sovereignty on the one hand, and political *Estekhlaf* on the other.

To conclude this discussion, in order to better capture the socialization experience of Islamic agents in the modern international society, we need a concept of socialization that can, first, be “placed” within the wider ontological landscape developed in this thesis, specifically, socialization should feature a relational quality in order to capture the role of other agents’ socialization activities on the socialization experience of Islamic agents, that together share the same relational plane of social activity, only a differentiated and uneven one. Second, this concept of socialization should give Islamic agents the needed “time and space” to reflect and manage its social role according to the transformational model of social activity instead of prophesizing internalization. In terms of fitting this discussion with the wider framework of this thesis what we have now is the ontological landscape that can guide us in mapping this interaction as outlined in chapters three and four, and substantive context for this interaction as outlined in chapter five through the conceptualization of the modern international society. What is needed now is to bring a movement within this context according to a relational understanding of socialization.

### ***International norm travel...an alternative path***

Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink’s work on *International Norm Dynamics and Political Change* gives a more comprehensive treatment of socialization through their notion of norm life cycle; their work, as will be demonstrated, is more than useful for this discussion in number of ways, first, their articulation of norm life cycle as “traveling” from the stage of “emergence” to the stage of “internalization” gives the context of socialization the needed movement and



dynamics that this section is after. Second, their framework also assigns a clearer role to other agents' activities on the socialization experience of the agents under study, that is Islamic agents, and hence the potential of a relational understanding of socialization. To be sure, having set for themselves the wider aim of capturing the life cycle of international norms, they treat socialization as a mechanism in only one of the stages, namely "norm cascade", although one might not exactly agree with this categorization, as discussed in the previous section. With this point in mind, Finnemore and Sikkink divide international norm life cycle into three stages. The first is "norm emergence"; primary actors in this phase are norm entrepreneurs with organizational platform, their motives are altruism, empathy, ideational commitment, and the primary mechanism of this stage is persuasion. The norm life cycle becomes ready to enter its second stage, "norm cascade", when norm entrepreneurs convince a critical mass of states to become norm leaders and adopt new norms.<sup>11</sup> Although they do acknowledge that it is not possible to predict exactly how many states must accept a norm to "tip" the process, because states are not equal when it comes to normative weight, empirical studies suggest that norm tipping rarely occurs before one-third of the total states in the system adopt the norm.<sup>12</sup>

According to their framework, once norm life cycle reaches the "norm cascade" stage more countries begin to adopt new norms more rapidly even without domestic pressure. They argue that the primary mechanism for "norm cascade" is an active process of international socialization, while the primary actors are states that are motivated by their search for legitimacy, reputation and esteem.<sup>13</sup> Stage three is defined by "internalization" where primary actors are law, profession, and bureaucracy, motivations are conformity, and primary mechanisms are habit

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<sup>11</sup> Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics and Political Change*, *International Organization*, Vol. 54, No.2 (Autumn 1998) p. 901.

<sup>12</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics*, p. 901.

<sup>13</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics*, p. 898.

and institutionalization. Finnemore and Sikkink are rather brief in their treatment of internalization, highlighting more than anything the role of habit and institutionalization in giving a norm a “taken for granted” quality that makes conformity with the norm almost automatic.<sup>14</sup> In any case, this discussion intends to engage mainly with the first two stages and save the dynamics of possible internalization for the next chapter when sources of Islamic agency within the Islamic state-society complex are de-bracketed in order to assign “tasks” of assessment of norms and their possible internalization to the right source of agency.

For now, however, the focus is on the first two stages and reading them in a way that links them to the ontological and substantive frameworks developed so far. It should be noted in this conjecture that the “norm emergence” stage offers considerably higher degree of clarity than Alderson’s “elsewhere in the international system” as we now have actors with motives who are linked to the international normative structure through mechanisms. That said, a re-examination of two points is needed in order to utilize the potential of this articulation of norm emergence. First, Finnemore and Sikkink rightly observe, “that efforts to promote a new norm take place within standards of “appropriateness” defined by prior norms.”<sup>15</sup> Emphasizing that the relationship of new normative claims to existing norms may influence the likeness of their impact, according to adjacency, precedent and fit.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, they give instructive examples of efforts to determine which substantive normative claims will be more influential in world politics. Their list of examples is rather wide and includes efforts focusing on norms associated with capitalism, liberalism, individualism, rational progress, universalism, and norms of bodily harm and protection of minority groups, etc.<sup>17</sup> The second point concerns the main actors in this

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<sup>14</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics*, p.904

<sup>15</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics*, p. 897.

<sup>16</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics*, p. 908.

<sup>17</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics*, p. 907.

stage, namely, individual norm entrepreneurs with institutional platforms like NGOs and international civil society, which does seem problematic since they bring states on board, a bit early in this stage, specifically before moving to the second stage through the process of “norm entrepreneurs convincing states to become norm leaders”.

A closer examination of these two points can give a different image of the stage of “norm emergence” than being one that is based on standards of appropriateness in a relational and material vacuum and dominated by individuals filled with empathy. Once we give substance to norms, norm entrepreneurs and norm leaders; relational and material constraints and resultant power configurations are revealed at this stage. To clarify in rather blunt terms, one could wonder: “When was the last time, a non-western/non-modern norm entrepreneur convinced a non-western/non-modern norm leader (state), to adopt a non-western/non-modern norm?” The argument is that “norm emergence” is a stage that takes place among western/modern members of the international society. One can hardly imagine a Muslim norm entrepreneur engaging, to make it more interesting, a western/modern state to become norm leaders on issues like the death penalty underlined by the normative claim that it offers a more just outcome for victims and their families, or prohibiting abortion to preserve the right of life for unborn babies. Such change of direction and substance to norm emergence will be hard to imagine because, as Finnemore and Sikkink, rightly observe it does not “fit” with the field of standards of appropriateness. However, what is missing in their articulation is the fact that the range of standards of appropriateness is set by those who have productive power over reproducing/transforming what is normal/abnormal, appropriate/inappropriate in the international society. Norm entrepreneurs do not have to search for norm leaders among states, there are already norm leaders out there!

To put it in a context, Finnemore and Sikkink seem to share the same problem with Reus-Smit; that is, offering an image of the international sphere as purely normative one, with a lack of attention to the other planes of social activity, the material and relational, and subsequently the patterns of power relations they give rise to. While Reus-Smit does this in relation to structure, Finnemore and Sikkink carry this pure normative conceptualization to processes of socialization. In their defence, their inclusion of the notion of standards of appropriateness and the relationships of those standards to new norms does link process to structure, yet, given that they conceptualize structure as “shared moral assessment”,<sup>18</sup> which is not very different from Reus-Smit’s normative complex, they do not take account of links between those standards of appropriateness on the one hand, and patterns of productive powers on the other hand. Those links should be captured prior to or at the “norm emergence” stage. For this reason Barnett and Duvall’s work on types of power was introduced in the final section of chapter five to cut through the purely normative structure of Reus-Smit and the purely normative process of norm emergence. What this re-imagination of the stage of “norm emergence” does is bring to light that making new normative claim is conditioned by transformation/reproduction capacities of agents. As argued in chapter five those capacities are a translation of types of power that are, in turn, configured according to differentiation among the members of international society that result from following or rejecting liberal standards of sovereignty and hegemonic belief in the moral purpose of the state. There is indeed a lot of truth in Finnemore and Sikkink’s examples of norms that are likely to “travel” successfully across the international sphere, which include norms associated with capitalism, liberalism, individualism, rational progress; all are expressions of the systems of knowledge which serve the modern moral purpose of the state and liberal standards of sovereignty.

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<sup>18</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics*, p. 892.

In terms of the overall framework of this thesis, this reading of the stage of “norm emergence” allows the hegemonic moral purpose of the state and the liberal standards of sovereignty to *move* through the system and meet “somewhere in the international system” Islamic agency. In this context, the “norm emergence” stage could be seen as confined to Reus-Smit and Margaret Archer’s “modern individual”. This discussion also disagrees with Finnemore and Sikkink on who are the main actors, in the sense of norm leaders (states) taking a central role so early in that stage, making them the main actors, not individual norm entrepreneurs, and subsequently on the associated motives and mechanisms. Moreover, understanding socialization as also a process of putting out successful claims, as argued in the last section, makes it plausible to view the stage of “norm emergence” as capturing the socialization experience of liberal modern members of the international society who enjoy productive power. In other words, if socialization has a relational quality that links the socialization experience of those who “teach” norms and the socialization experience of those who “learn” them, the stage of “norm emergence” captures the socialization experience of the “teachers” of norms.

*Membership in the modern International Society as an Islamic socialization experience*

The second stage of norm life cycle is “norm cascade”. As is the case with the stage of “norm emergence”, two points need to be raised in order to better capture the socialization of Islamic agents and non-western agents in general. The first concerns assignment of motives, where a change of direction from the motives of those who make new normative claims (altruism, empathy, etc.) to the motives of those who face normative claims (search for legitimacy, reputation and esteem) seem to escape an important set of motives that belong to states, or norm leaders, since it is norm leaders who, once persuaded by norm entrepreneurs, are the agents that carry the task of inducing other states to become norm followers through the process of

international socialization. This process involves inducing norm breakers to become norm followers through diplomatic praise or censure, either bilateral or multilateral, which is reinforced by material sanctions and incentives.<sup>19</sup> Yet, at this point we simply do not have motives for those agents who do most of the work of carrying norms through the international sphere. This is an important point because assessing the possibility of internalizing a new norm needs knowledge about motives of both would-be norm followers and norm leaders. While we do know the motives of the former, we do not know the motives of the latter. At the “sending end” of norms, we still have the motives of the “distant” norm entrepreneurs who do not seem to play any role in this encounter once have done their part in persuading norm leaders.

Second, Finnemore and Sikkink argue that what makes socialization work are agent-level motives, namely, legitimacy, reputation, and esteem; where more countries begin to adopt new norms more rapidly, even likening the situation to one of contagion.<sup>20</sup> According to them, states comply with the stage of “norm cascade” because of reasons related to their identity as members of the international society. They elaborate further that since state identity shapes state behavior, and that state identity is, in turn, shaped by the cultural-institutional context within which states act, what happens at the tipping point is that enough states and enough critical states endorse the new norm to redefine appropriate behavior for the identity called state, or some relevant subset of states such as (“liberal” state or “European” state).<sup>21</sup> Motivated by their search for legitimacy, reputation and esteem other members follow the new norms.

It could be noticed that in making their argument that they use the phrase “the identity called member of international society”, and “identity called state” interchangeably, which implies that

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<sup>19</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics*, p. 902.

<sup>20</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics*, p. 903.

<sup>21</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics*, p. 902.

they treat the two as one and the same thing or, at best, that the “identity called state” is inevitably constituted by the cultural and institutional context of the modern international society. In both cases, this is problematic since, “The identity called member of international society” is different from the “identity called state”. The former is a social role, located at the structural level, or in Bhaskar’s words a structural slot, while the latter is a structure that belongs to the state-society complex, which fills this structural slot. Moreover, the former as a social identity is rightly constituted, or given meaning by, the cultural-institutional context of the modern international society, while the latter draws from other cultural-institutional contexts; most apparently, the state-society complex and its ideational resources. Otherwise we are back to Wendt’s notion of the state, where it is offered as an empty platform to be constituted by the culture of the international society without much concern to what state-society relationship can bring to the “identity called state”.

Instead, a clear distinction and space should be maintained between what they refer to as “the identity called state”, and the “identity called member of international society”. What this distinction allows us to do is to put in place a more balanced “title” to the socialization process at hand, like, for example, “*the socialization experience of Islamic states in the modern international society*”, or, dare we say, the “*socialization experience of Islamic members of the modern international society*”? “ This formulation is unusual in contemporary discourse of international relations. The reason why is, as Finnemore and Sikkink’s formulation shows, there is an expectation that non-western/non-modern members of international society will, eventually, internalize the liberal standards of sovereignty and the hegemonic belief of the moral purpose of the modern/liberal state. In other words, it does not matter whether the state that is embodying the social role of member of international society is Islamic or not since it is inevitable that it will

internalize the norms that make it “liberal state”, and thus there is no reason to add a culturally distinct “title” to the phrase “member of international society”.

This needed space between the social role of member of international society and the agent that embodies it can best be captured by Bhaskar’s transformational model of social activity as introduced in chapter three and given a pictorial expression through the reconfigured version of analysis in chapter four. This space in turn leaves room for normative and ideational resources of the state-society complex to shape the “identity called state”, while acknowledging the expectations of “being liberal state” when embodying the social role of member of the modern international society. It is within this space that the “drama” of socialization of Islamic agents takes place. In there, nothing is inevitable!

To recap, Finnemore and Sikkink’s notion of norm “life cycle” contextualized embodiment of Islamic agents in international relations and offered the dynamics and relational dimension needed for operationalization. This served the argument that the operationalization of Islamic agents and non-western agents in general, should not take place under reified processes as in Alderson’s description of “norms originated elsewhere in the international system”. Instead these processes should acknowledge, or at least open the possibility for acknowledging, the dynamic nature of socialization involving mechanisms that link the socialization experience of one agent to those of other agents, including the relative transformative/productive capacities of their activities. A number of qualifications, however, were needed in order to fit the ontological landscape developed in chapters three and four and the corrected theoretical framework in chapter five. In the stage of “norm emergence”, the notion of “standard of appropriateness” and the relationship between new normative claims and existing ones contributed to linking process to structure. However, given that Finnemore and Sikkink define structure in one-dimensional



terms, that is, as shared moral assessment capturing only the inter-subjective or idealist plane of social activity, those “standards of appropriateness” were given contexts through Barnett and Duval’s “productive power” which brings to light the power dynamics and the relational and material dimensions of “making” a normative claim. In effect links the stage of “norm emergence” as a multidimensional process to structure as links between different planes of social activity, in accordance with the ontological principles adopted in this thesis. Moreover, it was argued that states, as norm leaders, rather than individual norm entrepreneurs, held centre stage, especially at the tipping point of moving from the “norm emergence” stage to the “norm cascade” stage. Again, this better serves the aim of reflecting that the “norm emergence” stage comes wrapped in productive and relational powers held by states.

This revision to Finnemore and Sikkink’s account addresses a key problem when moving from the “norm emergence” to the “norm cascade”, where there is no mention of the motives of norm leaders who induce other agents or would be norm followers to adopt the new norms. This oversight impacts negatively on capturing the relational quality of socialization and swerved the argument back to reification of the socialization process under the cultural-institutional context of the international society. Issues were taken with this articulation not only because of its deterministic logic but also because it misplaces these processes: they should be directed at the “identity called member of the international society”, not the “identity called state”. This distinction in turn better suits the transformational model of social activity, which emphasizes a “hiatus” between agency and the social role it embodies, in this case, between the state and the social role of member of international society. It was argued that it is in this space that agents reflect on the context of embodiment and the idealist, relational, and material constraints it brings, and it is here that the socialization experience of Islamic agents takes place.

*From embarrassment, anxiety, and shame... To Love and Hope:*

As the Muslim *Ummah* was divided into nation-states, each allowed to fill a “structural slot” within the modern international society, or embody the social role of “member of international society”, and, further, were “handed” their Westphalian package, Muslim state-society complexes internalized norms of sovereignty, territoriality, and other norms and rules that order relations among members of international society. Since then, norm leaders never stopped making new normative claims, and Islamic agents, among others, continue to face demands to internalize them. The main difference, however, is that the target of those new normative claims is no longer confined to rules among states, but rather targets norms and rules within states. The most active issues on the international agenda today include the death penalty, abortion, gay rights, economic policies, labour rights, gender equality, etc. that have very little to do with ordering international life.

As mentioned before, Finnemore and Sikkink argue that actors’ motivations and search for legitimacy, reputation, and esteem are what make socialization at the “norm cascade” stage work. The closer they get to the stage of “internalization”, the more they ground these motivations within more micro-feelings like embarrassment, anxiety, guilt, and shame on the part of “norm breakers”<sup>22</sup> which pushes them to become norm followers. In terms of locating those rather strong, feelings at the right agential entity (individual statesmen, states, state-society complex) they do not offer very helpful insights; an issue which will be dealt with in the next chapter. For now, the question is, “Why should an Islamic state-society complex embodying the social role of member of international society feel embarrassed, anxious, guilty or ashamed for not adopting or internalizing norms associated with liberal sovereignty and the hegemonic moral

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<sup>22</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics*, p. 903

purpose of the state of serving the material needs of the modern individual?" The answer is because of the productive, structural and institutional powers of "norm leaders" that allow them to induce norm breakers to become norm followers through diplomatic praise or censure, either bilateral or multilateral, which is reinforced by material sanctions and incentives. Being called names like "uncivilized", "freedom-haters", etc. clearly creates an uncomfortable socialization experience in the modern international society as the assignment of these sub-social roles impacts agent's position, rank, and status on the relational plane and subsequently access to inter-subjective and material resources. It is an empirical fact that Islamic agents have been the target of the assignment of these sub-roles more than any other agents in modern international relations; the dilemma is that they continue to face more penetrating new norms wrapped in institutional and structural powers of "norm leaders" if they uncritically internalize them, they might lose a piece of their soul, if they resist, they are likely to be called names and then slip into the psychological cycle of the negative micro-level feelings: anxiety, embarrassment, shame, etc.

At this stage, any critique of Finnemore and Sikkink's work is only directed at the assumption of inevitable internalization that results from agent's "suffering" or avoiding suffering these micro feelings. Yet the mere use of and attention to this level of agential sensitivity is a huge improvement in the way the same processes are handled within mainstream IR theory. What they offer is a more humane alternative to the three popular stages of socialization/internalization; namely, coercion, calculation and belief, most famously used by Wendt in articulating the thickness of his three cultures of anarchy according to agential commitments.<sup>23</sup> Although not explored thoroughly, Finnemore and Sikkink's schema of micro feelings does escape the irreversibility of the standard stages of socialization/internalization, where agent under coercion

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<sup>23</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 266.

is destined to calculate instrumentally the internalization of a new norm, which in turn, through repeated interaction, habit, and institutionalization, eventually leads to internalization through belief. Most accounts of socialization that employ this schema do not seriously explore the possibility of reversibility of this process. This is however a real possibility that can result from a favourable material change on the part of the agent that might halt or break this process in between coercion and calculation, or an ideational change within the state-society complex that might reverse this process just before the “belief” stage. One could “see” this reversibility starting from the eighties in many Islamic state-societies where the increasing Islamization of societies has put a break, and sometimes reverses this process. This possibility will be further explored in the next section.

Anxiety, shame, and other micro-feelings that are associated with the search for legitimacy and self-esteem do not have to lead to “panic” and a situation of contiguous form of norm acceptance by agents as concluded by Finnemore and Sikkink. One reason why they reach this conclusion is because they do not acknowledge that agents subject to these micro feelings might direct, or feel them, against other sources of approval and legitimacy like their own societies, or, alternatively, because they assume that when states or statesmen face a new normative claim, their own societies will stand with “the international society” in exerting pressure for internalizing these norms, a very popular assumption in western policymaking discourse. For the authors, this assumption is implied in their wording when they describe the “contagious” nature of norm transfer from one country to another when they argue, “states start to internalize norm more rapidly even without domestic pressure.”<sup>24</sup> This assumption has been given clearer substance by Harold Koh’s notion of “social internalization”, a back-door mechanism of internalization that is

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<sup>24</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics*, p. 903.

based on the assumption that societies start to value new norms through non-state interaction with outside groups and NGOs before they pressure their states and statesmen to adopt these new norms.<sup>25</sup> This is not usually the case, however, more frequently societies become more conservative than their state elite in internalizing new norms. Of course this argument needs to be investigated empirically. Yet, initial evidence might suggest that Islamic state-society complex might lean towards the latter pattern. That said, the schema of bringing on board these micro feelings remains helpful not only to the Islamic case but the socialization experience of non-western agents where more specific studies on the direction of these feelings can be explored.

In the Islamic case, the direction of these micro feelings is clear; another look at the saying of the prophet Mohammad (PBUH), which was mentioned in chapter three, does not only suggest this clear direction but also suggests a more settled psychological personality of Islamic agent that shields it from the “contagious panic” when assessing a new normative claim: “...And know that if the entire nation were to gather in order to benefit you with something, they could not benefit you with anything except with that which Allah (SWT) has willed for you. And if the entire nation were to gather in order to harm you with something, they could not harm you with anything except with that which Allah (SWT) has willed against you.”<sup>26</sup> Which was rather, playfully translated, but with serious theoretical consequences, in chapter three to contemporary terms as “...and know that if the entire members of the international society were to gather in order to benefit you with something, they could not benefit you with anything except with that which Allah (SWT) has willed for you. And if the entire members of the international society

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<sup>25</sup> Harold Koh, Frankel Lecture: Bringing International Law Home, (1998), Faculty Scholarship Series, paper 2102, p. 643.

<sup>26</sup> Narrated by Al-Tirmithi.

were to gather in order to harm you with something, they could not harm you with anything except with what Allah (SWT) has willed against you”. This is *Tawhid* in action.

Recall from chapter three that *Tawhid*, or the belief in the oneness of *Allah* (SWT) involved directing intentionality and feelings like, love, hope, and fear towards *Allah* (SWT). The intervention of *Tawhid* at this stage ensures that Islamic members of international society have another higher and more reliable source of esteem and reputation than approval from other members of the international society. Now it could be the case that one can maintain this direction of intentionality and feelings toward *Allah* (SWT) while saving oneself from “blushing” at every new demand to internalize norms, but this is not always the case in the modern international society. As mentioned, many issues on the international agenda today do not target inter-national relations, but identities of state-society complexes, some of which clearly conflict with Islamic guidelines for personal and collective morality. This is a tension that should be central to an effort attempting to capture the socialization experience of Islamic members of international society. To capture this tension, or lack of it, depending on the norm at hand, a layer of reflexivity and another of capacity for moral assessment should be inserted at the agential level. Together they ensure that Islamic agents escape the unnecessary “panic” which results in inevitable internalization, and instead reflect on the role of *Khalifah*, the mission of *Estekhlaf*, its pillars of *Tawhid*, *Tazkiyah* and *Omran*, and assess new normative claims accordingly.

### *From inevitable internalization to the possibility of rejection*

Just as anthropocentric sovereignty is a “metaphysical achievement” of the western/modern world, as argued by Wendt and Duvall,<sup>27</sup> so is *Estekhlaf* and the associated relationship of endowment with *Allah* (SWT) an Islamic metaphysical achievement. Unlike anthropocentric sovereignty, however, which is the norm, and thus might even be reproduced unintentionally, *Estekhlaf* hardly features in modern social arrangements, which makes a high level of reflexivity on the part of Islamic agents a requirement. Accordingly, a framework designed to capture the socialization experience of Islamic members of international society should not treat reflexivity as moments of reflection as in mainstream western IR theory which usually favours automatic reproduction over intentional transformation in order not to interrupt structural constructive forces. Rather, it should be treated as a habit that always precedes action. Moreover, reflexivity is not only a pre-requisite for action but also for moral assessment. It ensures that moral assessment is not performed in an ontological vacuum, or within the premises of the prevailing culture. Instead, reflexivity ensures that moral assessment is approached within a more comprehensive cognitive activity of re-description of man-made social arrangements according to *Estekhlaf*.

In this context, the function of reflexivity is to ensure that Islamic agents are capable of linking endowment to embodiment, their two dimensions of agency, as demonstrated in chapter three. More specifically, reflexivity ensures that Islamic agents are capable of, cognitively, placing the modern international society on the field of *Estekhlaf*, and linking the role of “member of international society” to the role of *Khalifah*. Ontologically, this means an extension of the planes of social activity beyond man-made arrangements and the social world in general. This

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<sup>27</sup> Raymond Duvall and Alexander Wendt, “Sovereignty and the UFO”, *Political Theory*, Vol. 36, No.4, (August 2008) pp: 607-633.

extension includes all planes of social activity and subsequently systems of knowledge of the idealist plane and relationships, status and rank of the relational plane. Reflexivity then gives Islamic agents other sources of knowledge beyond the hegemonic moral purpose of the state and meanings of individuality and individual needs and further how to satisfy them according to *Tazkiyah*. On the relational plane, this extension loosens the psychological pressure that leads to embarrassment, anxiety and shame, and, in turn, according to Finnemore and Sikkink, to search for approval and reputation and esteem at the relational plane of the modern international society with the inevitable result of internalization of norms. Instead, armed with reflexivity, Islamic agents are given the choice, theoretically, to escape the “standards of appropriateness” or the productive power of the “modern individual”, and face more comfortably the pressure exerted through their relational and institutional powers, when performing a moral assessment of a new normative claim. In these terms, reflexivity ensures that Islamic agents are capable of reflecting on their position in the superstructure of *Estekhlaf*, and subsequently measure the productive power of the “modern individual” against that of *Allah* (SWT) when assessing a new normative claim according to *Tazkiyah*, and, further, measure the relational power of the “modern individual” against that of *Allah* (SWT) when subject to coercion or material sanctions as a consequence of moral assessment. That said, the capacity of reflexivity as a means to escape the uncritical reproduction of the prevailing culture is not intended to articulate Islamic agents in international relations as living in a world of their own, but, rather, to emphasize the uniqueness of their socialization experience in a social arrangement that is dominated by the “modern individual”.

If reflexivity is Islamic agents’ capacity to sustain their awareness of their position within the superstructure of *Estekhlaf* and subsequently link embodiment to endowment, then moral



assessment is the capacity for the more technical task of actually managing the endowed and embodied dimensions of agency through observing the mission of *Estekhlaf* within the social arrangement of the modern international society. The technicality of moral assessment concerns complex normative based operations that include looking at the intrinsic characters of the norm (substance and content)<sup>28</sup> as well as its path dependency, and family of norms (liberalism, capitalism, etc). On the side of *Tazkiyah* and Islamic guidelines, moral assessment might involve searching for more inclusive interpretation or understandings of correspondent moral guidelines before assessing the incommensurability of international norms with Islamic moral guidelines. What adds complexity to these operations is that they do not take place in a purely normative context like Reus-Smit's normative complex, or even Finnemore and Sikkink's shared moral assessment, but always take place within material and relational constraints. This, however, does not need to imply purely material and rational calculations as in Wendt's three stages of internalization, but rather implies that normative assessment should include an assessment of the relational and material dimensions of the new normative claim in terms of, "Who is making the norm? What are their motives? And what are the material and relational consequences of different outcomes of this assessment?" In this sense, material calculation is not a distinct stage but is part of an instance of assessing a norm according to the mission of *Estekhlaf* which itself includes material (Omran) and relational (Tawhid) pillars, given appreciation of the hierarchal relationships among these pillars as outlined in chapter three. Islamic sources do speak of this complexity; an important methodology of Islamic *fiqh* is the assessment or weighting of the

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<sup>28</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, *International Norm Dynamics*, p. 906.

“corruptive” aspect of a given action including the adoption of norm or policy (*Mafasid*), and the “good” aspect of it (*Masaleh*).<sup>29</sup>

Moral assessment then operates at a different level than that of reflexivity. The latter is cognitive capacity that ensures that Islamic agents understand their place in the world and hence re-describe their social arrangements where they are embodied according to the ontological principles of *Estekhlaf*. Moral assessment operates at the policy level where the mission of *Estekhlaf* and its pillars feature in behaviour and decisions. Moreover, on a collective level, moral assessment could include political and social debates within the Islamic state-society complex when facing a new normative claim as long as those involved in this debate are committed to Islamic sources as moral guidelines. Moral assessment then is a capacity at the individual level and a process at the collective level. In both cases it implies normative evaluation and assessment of material and relational consequences of adopting or not adopting a norm. By definition “assessment” cannot lead to one inevitable outcome, that is internalization, especially in the Islamic case where there are already moral guidelines in the form of *Tazkiyah* that cover many aspects of social and political realms. This suggests, in turn, that internalization is only one possible outcome among others. The following discussion suggests four different outcomes.

#### *Internalization:*

The rather defensive approach taken above to capture Islamic socialization experience should not cloud views that Muslims have clear permission to internalize sound norms when facing one. The prophet Mohammad (PBUH) says, “A Muslim is always in search for wisdom, *wherever*

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<sup>29</sup> See works of traditional Islamic scholars like Ibn Taimiyah and Ibn Alqayyim.

he/she finds it, he is most worthy of it”.<sup>30</sup> And indeed there are plenty of “wise” normative claims that Islamic agents come across as members of the international society. From an Islamic perspective then, as long as the new norm passes the Islamic moral assessment then there is no reason why it should be rejected. New norms might be institutional solutions for expressing Islamic values that have not been translated into institutions for lack of institutional know-how; moreover, those new norms could be modern expressions of forgotten or unrealized Islamic values.

While new norms that come from non-Islamic contexts might have different form, fit, and direction to those original Islamic norms of *Tazkiyah*, it should be remembered that when we talk about the “modern individual” and the “Khalifah”, as two different understandings of human agency we are not talking about two different species. The two still have the same set of needs; yet, the issue is always one of how to satisfy those needs on the individual, collective and institutional levels. That said, it could be safely assumed that norms concerning relationships between states or what English School theorists call pluralist values,<sup>31</sup> have a better chance of being internalized within Islamic state-society complex than norms targeting the individual and society within states, or solidarist values, since these will have to pass through more “checking points” in terms of moral assessment as they reach deeper within the Islamic state-society complex. This takes us to a more historically informed account of internalization of international norms by Islamic agents; where the post-colonial era of the 1950s and 1960s witnessed the bulk of new members of the modern international society introduced to international norms. Then, those norms seemed to be internalized fairly “smoothly” not only at the state level through the

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<sup>30</sup> Narrated by Al-Tirmithi and Ibn Majah.

<sup>31</sup> See for example Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society. A Study of Order in World Politics*, (London: Macmillan, 1977) and Robert Jackson, *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

ruling elite, who were mostly usually western educated and championing modernity<sup>32</sup> but also within societies who displayed more openness to foreign lifestyles and ideologies (both Eastern: communist/socialists and Western: liberal). With the increasing Islamization of societies during the 1980s and 1990s, however, and the move of normative claims to the more demanding solidarist side, international norms seem to have a harder time intruding into the Islamic state-society complex which does not fit the pattern in other regions where the first wave of internalization of the pluralist norms set the stage for smoother internalization of the solidarist wave. This suggests, that the Islamization of state-society complex is an important variable that cannot be overlooked in the name of applying “one-fits all” socialization account of non-western agents. Instead it suggests that Islamic agents have their unique socialization experience both in theory and history. This brief historical account could also point to the possibility of reversibility of internalization where norms achieving a “taken for granted” status in one political and cultural era might be up for problematizing in another. This does not only concern norms targeting state-society relationships or individual level but also pluralist norms like national sovereignty and territoriality where the increasing mobility of a transnational Islamic identity seems to bring to light their socially constructed nature and inspire many to seek the destruction of their meanings, ideas and the shared culture that sustain these norms.

This possible reversibility of internalization also suggest an interesting change of direction of events in Wendt’s stages of internalization; a *belief* in the “corruptive” aspects of previously internalized norms based on a higher level of reflexivity and more conservative moral assessment by a given generation might lead to *calculation* of the material and relational

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<sup>32</sup> Nuri Yurdusev, “The Middle East Encounter with the European International Society”, in Ana Gonzalez and Barry Buzan, editors, *International Society and the Middle East: English School Theory at the Regional Level* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan: Palgrave Studies in International Relations, 2009).

consequences of de-internalization of this previously internalized norm, which could lead further to the decision of standing up to *coercion* when exerted by norm leaders.

The above should not imply that internalization of international norms by Islamic agents is always fragile. Rather, it emphasizes that it is not a linear process but a complex one that might go through ups and downs and can even be reversed. To be sure, internalization of a non-Islamic norm by an Islamic state-society complex, in terms of a norm achieving a “taken for granted quality” or not being up for continuing debates as implicitly defined by Finnemore and Sikkink is rare without taking a further step, that is assimilation, or making a norm “sound and feel” like an Islamic one. New normative claims originated in the modern international society, as wise as they could be, are still adjacent and subsets of knowledge systems like capitalism, individualism, and liberalism that, in turn, reproduce the hegemonic moral purpose of the state of serving the material needs of the modern individual and liberal standards of sovereign rights. This also points to the difficulty of assessing the range and level of intrusion of a given norm as captured by the association of the hegemonic moral purpose of the state on the macro level and the understanding of the “individual” on the micro level. Thus, issues of adjacency, fit and path dependency, plus terminology and discourse, require an effort to make a norm “fit” within the Islamic normative makeup of the Islamic state-society complex for the simple reason that a new norm originated elsewhere does not only have to fit within the existing Islamic moral system, but also to be used as a base for further rounds of collective purification that goes along with the mission of *Estekhlaf*.

#### *Assimilation:*

Assimilation is one of those terms that suffers from bias of direction; both in social sciences and popular culture, assimilation usually refers to the absorption of agency, whether an individual,

group of immigrants, or culturally distinct group into the prevailing culture. In this case, the cultural-institutional context is the assimilator and the identity of an agent or individual is what to be assimilated. There is an alternative way, however, to look at assimilation, one that changes the direction of this process by making the assimilator the agent and the new norm or set of norms that which is to be assimilated. A typical natural science or biological definition of assimilation would view the assimilator as the body and that which is to be assimilated is the substance. Likewise, this discussion views the Islamic state-society complex as the body, the assimilator, and new norms as the substance, that which is to be assimilated within the Islamic state-society complex.

We can think of different types of assimilation that makes a norm “fit” with the moral purpose of the Islamic state. Most apparent of those is terminology; a new norm must fit within the discursive landscape of the Islamic state-society complex. As it is destined to become subject for political and social debates, this new norm should be expressed in Islamic political and cultural language. Second, assimilation also implies the effort of assessing the new norm in terms of the possibility of fit and adjacency to Islamic “standards of appropriateness” and higher values. Since, as mentioned before, international norms are based on knowledge systems like liberalism, individualism, etc. assimilation, might also involve an effort of delinking the new norm from its family of values before being assimilated within an Islamic context.

It could be argued that assimilation closely displays the features of internalization, although assimilation seems also to imply more stability in the sense of becoming part of the Islamic “standard of appropriateness” and thus the potential for reversibility in this case is more limited. Moreover, assimilation of a norm means that it has become part of the Islamic “self” and

accordingly the norm being assimilated becomes not only itself a standard for assessment of new norms, but also a tool in making and justifying Islamic alternative normative claims.

Assimilation, depends on both the capacity of Islamic state-society for what can be called “normative engineering” and openness for the usefulness of non-Islamic norms on the one hand, and the nature of the norm itself on the other; some norms simply do not work easily outside their knowledge systems, for example blasphemy laws that allow individuals to not only criticize religions and religious figures like prophets, but also show disrespect and insult them. Although at first instance this norm could be placed under “freedom of expression”, a closer look that keeps in mind the discussions on the “modern individual” offered in chapter five, can reveal that this norm is a subset of hostility towards religion which has been part of the modern individual’s road to “win” liberal sovereignty. There is no amount of normative engineering that can make such a norm fit into an Islamic moral framework. Prohibition of use of weapons of mass destruction, on the other hand, is a norm that can be easily assimilated within the Islamic moral system that has well consolidated and developed standards and discourse on prohibition of targeting civilians in wars.

In short, for a norm to be assimilated by an Islamic member of international society it should be intended for moral development, purification, or *Tazkiyah*, that can find roots in Islamic moral system, and thus can contribute to performing the mission of *Estekhlaf*.

#### *Rejection:*

It could be argued that rejection of an international norm is the least explored socialization outcome in western IR research because of the assumption of the inevitability of internalization. Rejection and associated resistance could be understood as capturing the experience of agential

struggle under coercion; an experience that does not usually receive much attention in western IR theory. Since this thesis takes a different angle and positions itself as an attempt to capture a first person perspective concerning Islamic agents it does not follow the logic that coercion will eventually lead to internalization, but instead entertain the idea that norms might “die out” at the borders of the Islamic state-society complex, that rejection and resistance to a norm might actually “work”. In this sense, rejection becomes a dependent possible outcome, not a stage towards one inevitable outcome.

The articulation of the socialization experience of Islamic agents, as one of *Estekhlaf* based state-society complex operationalized under the structure of the modern international society, makes rejection of a norm a very likely outcome. Just like a norm “originating elsewhere in the international system” can contribute to performing the mission of *Estekhlaf*, other norms have built in features that make them not amenable to such purpose. These norms can be divided into two types: First are norms that do not fit with the purification guidelines of Islam and are viewed from an Islamic perspective as corrupting the individual and the Islamic society if internalized. Second are norms that are purposely designed to “cut” all links with God and religious guidelines, hence, directly challenging the pillar of *Tawhid*, the most basic pillar of the mission of *Estekhlaf*. Wendt’s and Duvall’s understanding of sovereignty, as a metaphysical achievement is a good pointer to new norms adjacent to this understanding of sovereignty. Those norms simply denude the social world, or more specifically the relational plane of social arrangements, from the relationship of endowment or authorization and accountability with *Allah* (SWT). Those can be found in different levels of political and social reality, including the state-society relationship, state/church (in this case mosque) relationship, meanings of citizenship, individual rights, etc. While these might yield to a subset of man-made norms that do not conflict with both



collective and individual *Tazkiyah* and purification, from an Islamic perspective the problem with this type of norms is that they change the standards of assessments of norms, and with time, the habit of reflecting on one's place according to *Estekhlaf*. In layman's terms, one can say that such norms make the question "What does Allah (SWT) say about this?" not a part of debating political and social issues.

*Dissemination:*

Again, this part of socialization of non-western agents in general has not received much attention by western theorists. Again, cultural and disciplinary structures simply do not allow for such space in western theoretical frameworks. From a non-western perspective, however, it is not easy to understand why the possibility of the "other side" making counter normative claims and proposing alternative norms is never part of the socialization experience. In the Islamic case, Manjoud's definition of the *Estekhlaf* based Islamic state-society complex includes the well-grounded Islamic notion of *Shehadah* or "witnessing" in addition to "preserving religion".<sup>33</sup> While the latter might tend towards the "rejection" outcome of an international norm in the name of "preserving religion", the former tends towards the extra effort of making an alternative claim to the rejected one. "Witnessing" or *Shehadah* is both a collective and individual effort that not only includes introducing Islam and Islamic values and solutions to the world, but also bears witness that others have been introduced to Islam and their reaction of acceptance or rejection has also been witnessed. In order to bear witness to this process, Muslims should have played their part in disseminating Islam and Islamic alternatives to others. In a way, disseminating could be understood as the ideal end-stage of the Islamic socialization experience that could follow both rejection and assimilation.

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<sup>33</sup> Mutafa Manjoud, 'The Islamic State as The Unit of Foreign Relations of Islam', in Nadia Mustafa's 'International Relations in Islam', (Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1996) p.78.

### ***Conclusion:***

This chapter attempts to link the substantive account of structure offered in chapter five, to the Islamic experience in international relations; for this, process was needed. Most accounts of process in western IR theory however, seem to operate “behind the back” of agents, or simply not experienced by agents. For this reason, when socialization was chosen to give substance to process, the formulation “socialization experience of Islamic agents” was essential. While still understood as a process, the point was to emphasize that rather than being a tool for theorists to make their frameworks work by creating, directing, and predicting a movement within, process of socialization cannot be separated from the agential experience of it. To maintain this understanding, the process of socialization was placed within the ontological landscape developed in this thesis; where both movement within the system and agential awareness and experience of it can be captured. Within the hiatus offered by Bhaskar’s transformational model of social activity socialization linked the intentional reproductive/transformational action of Islamic agents to the structure of the modern international society. The conceptualization of structure as links between the idealist, material and relational planes of activity meant that socialization in the sense of making and receiving international norms had to feature the relational and material dimensions of “norm travel”. For this reason, the chapter insisted on a relational understanding of socialization in order to take account of the fact that demands to internalize norms come wrapped in relational power of status, rank, and hierarchy among members of international society, which means that the socialization experience of each agent is conditioned by their position in the relational plane of social activity. These ontological qualifications resulted in a socialization experience of Islamic agents that features the utilization of the agential capacities of reflexivity and moral assessment. The former is necessary to bring

on board their awareness of the role of *Khalifah* and its two dimensions of endowment and embodiment, while the latter is necessary to manage this linkage between endowment and embodiment, or in other words, to manage the embodied role of “member of international society” and the endowed role of “Khalifah” according to the mission of *Estekhlaf*. This, in turn, resulted in different possibilities of socialization including: internalization, assimilation, rejection, and dissemination.

The chapter maintained a rather general and cautious terminology when referring to the part of Islamic state-society complex responsible for utilizing different agential capacities like reflexivity, moral assessment and communication in producing “feedback” to the international level. The next chapter de-brackets the sources of agency within the Islamic state-society complex which were proposed in chapter four, namely, causal powers of the institutional state, intentional human agents embodied within, and the ideational resources of society, in order to allocate these agential tasks to the right agential source.

**Chapter Seven**  
***“States do not go to Heaven...Statesmen Do”*: Islamic agency between Moral and Causal Responsibilities**

Imagine a Muslim statesman working in his office. He starts his working day with a look at the U.S Department of State’s human rights report where he finds negative remarks about his country on human rights issues because of the failure to internalize or adopt certain western liberal values. It is 12:00 P.M and the call for noon prayers starts. As a an average practicing Muslim he stops working, go to perform his prayers where he starts with the phrase “*Allah Akbar*” meaning “God is greater” Which he repeats at least twenty times throughout the course of praying, which also involves asking *Allah* (SWT) for guidance to the straight path four times, and placing his forehead on the ground in submission eight times. Once done, he goes back to his office, only to be requested to make a decision on tightening the implementation of Security Council economic sanctions against a fellow Muslim state. Two hours later, however, again, he stops working to perform the afternoon prayers, and finds a report waiting on his desk, this one about a free trade agreement with a western state that requests market access to his country’s financial sector for its non-Islamic (traditional) banks. It is almost time for sunset prayers and the conclusion of a working day that has witnessed an intense shift between worshiping *Allah* (SWT) and involvement in contemporary international relations. Although, according to the framework provided in the previous chapters, “shifting”, does not really capture the process of linking the role of *Khalifah* to the worldly role of “statesman”. Instead it insists that the *Khalifah* is present at the office as much as the “statesman” is present at the prayer rug.

I agree this image of the “worshiping statesman” is harder to sink in than the image of the “worshiping IR researcher” in chapter two, not only for western audiences but also for Muslim ones. There are a number of reasons for this difficulty; first, is that the decision-making office of a statesman is more heavily guarded by worldly meanings, relations and “material” incentives/constraints against Islamic or faith based meanings in general than is the case with the research desk of the Muslim IR researcher. In other words, the structural context for decision-making in international politics is far more constraining than those in academia. Second, even when contemporary Muslim statesmen use Islamic discourse, few have matched their actions to such discourse resulting in real difficulty in tracing those actions, both relationally to *Tawhid*, and ideationally to *Tazkiyah*. And third, and in any case, theoretically speaking, we do not even “see” statesmen; we “see” states and states do not pray!

Nor reflect, make moral assessment, or decide on internalization or rejection of international norms. Directing the argument to mainstream western IR theorists, one can argue, “you cannot have it both ways”, if the state does not “pray”, then it does not reflect, make moral assessments and eventually internalize western norms. Yet, if it is a “useful fiction”, then it is useful to western scholars. What seems more useful to Islamic audiences is to de-bracket sources of Islamic agency and allocate both causal and moral responsibility along the stages of Islamic action in international relations, namely, reflexivity, moral assessment and communicating this moral assessment to the international level, which is the aim of this chapter. Towards this aim, section one will briefly argue for this move of de-bracketing and then allocating agential tasks to appropriate agential sources instead of maintaining the “fictional” allocation of multiple agential tasks to the Islamic state-society complex as a unitary actor. This will involve justification for moving away from the last stage of socialization, namely internalization, as articulated by

western literature. Instead the chapter will recall the reconfigured version of analysis as an ontological map which can better capture sources of Islamic agency; namely the causal powers of the institutional state, the intentionality of Muslim statesmen embedded within and the ideational resources of society. The utilization of these sources of agency, according to political *Estekhlaf* and levels of analysis can give a more accurate image of the socialization experience of Islamic agency in international relations.

Section two will start with the actual placing of stages or “moments” of Islamic action to different sources of agency by allocating reflexivity to intentional human agents within the institutional state structure. The section will argue that intentionality is a pre-requisite for reflexivity and will demonstrate that intentionality and by extension reflexivity are properties of human agents alone. Section three will move to allocating moral assessment to the ideational resources of society. Their realization as such, however, requires both constitutive and causal links with other sources of agency within the Islamic state-society complex which will be explicated clearly. In section four, the causal powers of the institutional state will be burdened with the capacity to make contact with the macro structures of the modern international society, only that those powers need to be activated by intentional and reflective statesmen, a recognition that will be used to argue that causal powers of the institutional state do not only involve effectiveness, but equally importantly, direction and substance. This will complete the linking of all sources of Islamic agency together, but without committing any ontological dislocation of properties.

The chapter will end with a brief discussion on how this framework can be used to distinguish, yet link, sources of both moral and causal responsibility, allowing researchers to focus on each while operating at the same ontological and theoretical grounds.

### *De-bracketing Sources of Islamic Agency: Methodological Choice or Ontological Necessity?*

The last two chapters operated at the macro level in order to explore the macro links between the institutional structure of the modern international society and the totality of the Islamic state society complex. This encounter, in turn, was organized at the point of contact, structural slot, or the macro social role of “member of international society”. Capturing this encounter resulted in a clearer image of the structural configuration where Islamic agency operates in terms of the origins of international norms or higher-order values, as Reus-Smit calls them,<sup>1</sup> and the relational and material constraints/facilitations that condition their reproduction/transformation. To emphasize this level of macro interaction an abstraction of treating the totality of the Islamic state-society complex as a unitary actor was maintained with the risk of confusing ontological properties and capacities among different agential sources. Thanks to the literature on socialization used in chapter six, most apparently Finnemore and Sikkink’s “*Political Change and International Norm Dynamics*”, signs of the need to move back to the micro human agential levels started to show. Indeed, welcome signs that fit the intentions at the start of this thesis of representing an Islamic account of agency that, while applicable to the macro social arrangements of international relations, does not have to sacrifice human agency. Once the image of the Islamic state-society complex filling or embodying the social role of “member of international society” is in place, and the effects of relational, inter-subjective and material planes of social activity of the international level are acknowledged, there is no need to go on and assign social action to this totality, or at least omit human activity from the totality of the

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<sup>1</sup> Christian Reus-Smit, ‘The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, And Institutional Rationality in International Relations’, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997) p. 30.

state-society complex's "action".<sup>2</sup> Instead of continuing at the macro-level to create a rather clumsy theoretical giant of the totality of the Islamic state-society complex burdened with "fictional" intentional action that is expected, but cannot, display capacities for reflexivity, moral assessment and rejecting or internalizing norms, a more sound methodological move that is based on Islamic and critical realist ontological principles is to de-assemble this totality. This make it possible to allocate and assign those stages of Islamic action to the right agential sources within the Islamic state-society complex, and by extension understand "who does what" in terms of moral responsibility versus causal responsibility when an Islamic member of international society faces or makes a new normative claim. To put it differently, disassembling the Islamic state-society complex aims at specifying what is awaiting international norms when entering the ontological terrain and normative sphere of the Islamic state-society complex. Although the literature on socialization offers a set of attempts to understand this last stage of internalization, the intention to refrain from using this literature as a guide was made clear in chapter six. The main work that chapter six engaged with, namely, Finnemore and Sikkink's norm life-cycle, offered a smooth path of internalization for international norms emphasizing three elements within the targeted state-society complex: law, professions, and bureaucracies.<sup>3</sup> Another attempt by Andrew Hurrell offers a schema for internalization as a three-dimensional process: discursive, bureaucratic, and legal.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, Flockhart's complex socialization, which makes a clear distinction between the level of the state and the level of society requiring two stages of

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<sup>2</sup> Colin Wight, 'State Agency: Social Action without human activity?' *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 30, Issue 02 (April 2004). p. 269.

<sup>3</sup> Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', *International Organization*, Vol. 54, No.2 (Autumn 1998) p. 898.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Hurrell, 'Norms and Ethics in International Relations', in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth Simmons (eds.) *Handbook of International Relations*, (London: Sage, 2002).



internalization, has a clear advantage,<sup>5</sup> as does Harold Koh, who emphasizes “social internalization” based on public legitimacy as one form of internalization in addition to political and legal internalization.<sup>6</sup> Although, they are all serious attempts, steering away from the path they open for the internalization of international norms was important for two reasons. First, because they still share the assumption, discussed in chapter six, that, socialization “must” lead to internalization. At the end, these are attempts by western scholars speculating about how western norms will be received in non-western state-society complexes. Second, because of the fact that we already have a map of the agential sources within the Islamic state-society complex developed in chapters three and four, there is no need to adopt a western-designed “one-fit-all” map of internalization that may or not fit the Islamic case. As the popular Arabic saying goes “People of Mecca know its venues more than others do”.

With this in mind, it is time to disassemble the totality of the Islamic state-society complex according to the map of agential sources and then allocate the agential tasks of reflexivity, making moral assessment and acting on this assessment to the right agential source. Further, to give it coherence by linking these operations according to the chain of accountability and authorization as articulated by Political *Estekhlaf*. The first step in this effort is to draw back on the proposed version of the levels of analysis developed in chapter four. Remember however, that using Onuf’s term of “Levels of being” rather than “levels of analysis” makes it more than a methodological device, but also an ontological map that helps us locate different agential sources. According to the “levels of being” the Islamic state-society complex occupies two levels of being where the second (the institutional state) emerges out of the first, or most basic (state-

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<sup>5</sup> Trine Flockhart, ‘Complex Socialization: A Framework for the Study of State Socialization’, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 12, No.1 (March 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Koh, Harold Hongju, "1998 Frankel Lecture: Bringing International Law Home" (1998). Faculty Scholarship Series. Paper 2102.

[http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss\\_papers/2102](http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss_papers/2102)

society complex). Also recall that the second level, that is the level of the institutional state, features at its bottom sub-level human agency. This satisfies the critical realist principle that in every level of being both agent and structure are necessary for any social act to be possible,<sup>7</sup> and that it is only through the acts of embedded human agents that action can occur.<sup>8</sup> From an Islamic perspective and the ontology of *Estekhlaf* human agency is always endowed, with the choice of acknowledging this endowment or not. Thus, at the bottom sub-level of the institutional state we have human agency expressed as “endowed, embodied intentional action”, basically a *Khalifah* who is linked to *Allah* (SWT) through endowment and subsequently morally responsible before him for performing the role he embodies at this sub-level, namely “statesman”.

Depending on the subject matter and research focus, endowment, embodiment, and intentional action can capture agential experience of this “statesman”, as long as structural planes of social activity that the context of embodiment gives access to are taken into account. While the individual human *Khalifah* residing at the bottom sub-level of the institutional state remains the champion of Islamic agency, stretching *Estekhlaf* to cover the totality of the Islamic state-society complex suggested that other sources of agency reside beyond those of individual human agency. Chapter four proposed two sources of agency alongside human agency: the causal powers of the institutional state and ideational resources of society. Together, the intentionality of statesmen, the causal power of the institutional state and the ideational resources of society make up the agential sources of Islamic state-society complex in international relations. The next step is to

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<sup>7</sup> Colin Wight, ‘Agents, Structures, and International Relations: Politics as Ontology’ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p. 111.

<sup>8</sup> Colin Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p.111.

allocate reflexivity, moral assessment and communicating this moral assessment to the international level at these agential sources.

### ***From Intentionality to Reflexivity***

From an Islamic perspective, it could be argued that reflexivity is the most important agential capacity especially for an Islamic agent embedded in un-Islamic man-made social arrangement since reflexivity becomes the most valuable cognitive instrument that allows agents to transcend their immediate social arrangements. To Islamic agency, reflexivity is their tool to escape man-made inter-subjective meanings, norms and rules to *Tazkiyah*, and escape the search for legitimacy by “reluctant” members of international society on the relational plane of social activity to *Tawhid*. Applying reflexivity to the security dilemma, Wendt views it as “recognizing and then ending one’s own contribution to the self-fulfilling prophecy that underlies the security dilemma”.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, we can apply this useful articulation of reflexivity to the normative dimension of structures of the modern international society as defined by liberal standards of sovereignty and the hegemonic moral purpose of the modern state. The key term at this stage is “recognizing” which directly calls for reflexivity. “Recognition” precedes “ending contribution” or directing/redirecting action. And thus, it is a cognitive moment that precedes an individual/collective action or even an institutional response, of course given clear distinction of agential properties and capacities. For Wendt, this “recognition” requires a critical look at the “Me” from the standpoint of the “I”.<sup>10</sup> He defines the “Me” as the self as it sees itself through the others’ eyes,<sup>11</sup> and the “I” as the self as a separate locus of thought and activity.<sup>12</sup> While

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<sup>9</sup> Alexander Wendt, ‘Social Theory of international Politics’, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p.362.

<sup>10</sup> Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics, p. 363.

<sup>11</sup> Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics, p. 227.

<sup>12</sup> Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics, p. 225.

acknowledging that we tend not to expect such reflexivity from states, he still gives the following example of “the effort of Soviet new thinkers to take away the western excuse for being afraid of the Soviet Union by engaging in unilateral peace initiatives”.<sup>13</sup> The wording in this example clearly suggests that “thinking”, recognition, and reflexivity was undertaken by Soviet thinkers, not the Soviet state, which makes it a counter-productive example that shows more than anything that the state is not capable of “thinking” or reflexivity.

The reason why an expectation of reflexivity by the state is not warranted is because, despite Wendt’s efforts in chapter five of his book, we still do not expect intentionality from states. To put it differently, it is hard to expect such high level of reflexivity from the state because Wendt’s move to allocate intentionality to the state in the first place is still problematic. This argument suggests that reflexivity is a function of, or supervenes on, intentionality; that is, one cannot display reflexivity if he/she is not an intentional actor. In chapter three of this thesis, Wendt’s introduction to the equation of intentional action (Intentional Action = Desire/interest + Belief/identity) was viewed as potentially fruitful for this project. Although treating this conjecture as only a useful clarifying device, it can still highlight this link between intentionality and reflexivity. As a cognitive capacity reflexivity could be viewed as an agential capacity that allows an agent to examine the belief/identity side of the equation and then *direct* intentional action away or end one’s contribution to reproducing the prevailing culture. This is the critical look at the “Me” from the standpoint of the “I” which Wendt sees as a requirement for “ending contribution”. The issue, however, is that even if we accept the ontological move of allocating intentionality to the state, and by extension the capacity for the “critical look” at the “Me” from the standpoint of the “I” which is complex cognitive activity and morally puzzling experience, in

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<sup>13</sup> Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 363.

terms of normative balance, the state as a corporate entity (the “I” or the corporate self) has very little normative knowledge compared to the “Me” which is home to type, role, and collective identities. The point, then, is that as long as intentionality is allocated to states it is not clear how reflexivity can be achieved. If intentionality is about directedness of the mind, feelings and actions,<sup>14</sup> then we need an agent who can ethically reason for directing the mind, feelings and, most importantly, action away from the prevailing culture. What is needed is a moral and psychological agent, a human agent. We need an agent who can argue for ending their contribution to the norm life cycle. More specifically, we need an agent who can ethically and morally “stand his ground” against the norm cascade stage despite its contagious nature.

From an Islamic perspective, re-allocating reflexivity from the state to intentional human agents within the state structure is even more essential to a proper ontological presentation of an agential experience based on *Estekhlaf*. The idea is that without “ontological *Estekhlaf*” “Political *Estekhlaf*” does not make sense. Failure to properly allocate the property of reflexivity to the right agential entity will likely bring failure to maintain a space for political *Estekhlaf*. To clarify, if we allocate intentionality and by extension reflexivity to the state, then the chain of accountability and authorization which originated with *Allah* (SWT) (*Almostakhlef*) and passes to the Muslim society (*Almostakhlaf laho*) is broken at the institutional state level for the simple reason that we do not have an agent therein enjoying reflexivity to operate at the same level of *Estekhlaf*. In other words, we do not have a *Mostakhlaf*.

The need for preserving reflexivity as a property of statesmen rather than states becomes even clearer when applying this discussion to the conception of modern international society with a prevailing culture of the moral purpose of the modern state and liberal standards of sovereignty.

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<sup>14</sup> John Searle, ‘What is an Institution?’, *Journal of Institutional Economics*, Vol. 1, Issue 01, (June 2005)

If we allocate reflexivity to the state then we are basically expecting the state, a corporate structure, to reflect on a prevailing culture, which has its moral purpose as its target. Here, we are expecting a critical look at the “Me” in this case “member of international society” from the standpoint of the “I” the “Islamic state”, something that states, Islamic or not, cannot do. Instead, we need a human agent within this conjecture who can look critically at the “Me” a “statesman”, from the standpoint of the “I”, a *Khalifah*. The latter captures “endowment”, while the former “embodiment”. What makes this case more interesting is the fact that, as demonstrated in chapter five, reproducing the moral purpose of the state and liberal standards of sovereignty also involves reproducing the “de-linking” from God the modern state, and, by extension, the social role of “statesman”. Such de-linking basically makes it harder for human agents who embody this social role to align or bring on board endowment, or, to put it differently, to link the eternal role of *Khalifah* to the social role of “statesman”. Mind that this process takes place at three levels, the modern international society, the state and the social role of “statesman”. The only level where we can expect an agent to “set back” and reflect on this process is the level of the human agent who fills the role of the “statesman”. That is why, while the macro image of “Islamic state-society complex” filling the role of “member of international society” should be kept in place, a move to the micro level was necessary to place a checkpoint of reflexivity that “meets” “norms originating elsewhere in the international system” when entering the Islamic sphere. Instead of having norms “flying over the heads” of statesmen by “fictionally” assigning reflexivity to the totality of the Islamic state-society complex, or wait for a moment of reflexivity by the Islamic state that might never come, those norms now pass by the intentionality of a human agent who is embodying the social role of “statesman”, yet, one who has chosen to direct

the mind, feelings and action towards *Allah* (SWT). So in terms of allocating agential tasks, reflexivity seems to be best placed and preserved as a property of intentional statesman.

### ***Ideational Resources of Society as Basis of Moral Assessment of International Norms***

Moral assessment is the next stage of Islamic agential action in international relations. It can only be reached when an appropriate level of reflexivity is ensured. This allows norms to be assessed in a context of *Estekhlaf*, which transcends the inter-subjective, relational, and material planes of the modern international society, to bring on board *Tawhid*, *Tazkiya* and *Omran* as criteria for this assessment. Allocating reflexivity to intentional statesmen within the structure of the institutional state does not mean, however, that they are capable of making such assessments, or do not need “outside help” to make moral assessments. That said, this acknowledgement does not need to take us back to Jackson’s notions of “statespeople” who only possess technical knowledge of, “how it feels like to be in the international system”<sup>15</sup> which eventually leads to the argument that international ethics is not external to world politics, that it is not something brought in from outside but just like ethics in any other sphere of human activity, international ethics develop within the activity itself.<sup>16</sup> Chapter two argued against these notions, and the argument was sustained in subsequent chapters, emphasizing that world politics, including the modern international society, is not immune from the ethics of *Estekhlaf*, which can indeed be brought in from the outside, just as the moral purpose of the state and liberal standards of sovereignty were brought in “from the outside”. Of course “Outside” here, as shown in chapter five, refers to liberal western societies.

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<sup>15</sup> Robert Jackson, ‘International Relations as a Craft Discipline’, in Cornelia Navari ‘Theorizing International Society: English School Methods’ (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). P.26.

<sup>16</sup> Jackson, International Relations as a Craft Discipline, p.26.

Moreover, Jackson's argument led him to the claim that when/if "statespeople" call for "outside help" in making moral assessments, it should be an assessment that is in line with the conduct of statespeople and by standards that are generally accepted to those same statespeople.<sup>17</sup> To escape this narrow state/international system space for moral assessment the second source of Islamic agency, namely, the ideational resources of society, should be brought in. This can be done in two ways. First, is to demonstrate that statesmen are more than agents or bureaucrats of the institutional state, merely behaving according to bureaucratic codes of operations. Rather, they are agents of the totality of the Islamic state-society complex, embodying its value system and ideational resources. In making his argument for the ontological necessity of human action within the state structures, Wight gives an example that can also serve this argument: He states that, "a democratic state requires agents committed, at, some level, to democratic norms and principles. If such agents were no longer to be found, then such a state would encounter severe difficulty in remaining democratic."<sup>18</sup> Applying this example to the Islamic case and changing the wording accordingly, "an Islamic state requires agents committed, at, some level, to Islamic norms and principles. If such agents were no longer to be found, then such a state would encounter severe difficulty in remaining Islamic." While democratic norms might be, in a way, international norms and come from "elsewhere in the international system", at least to Islamic agents, commitment to Islamic norms and principles by Islamic human agents prior to their embedment within the state structure must have come from their socialization within the Muslim society. This means that Muslim statesmen embedded within the Islamic state bring with them the ideational resources of society through learning, education and socialization within the Islamic society prior to embodying roles within the institutional state. The point is that even

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<sup>17</sup> Jackson, *International Relations as a Craft Discipline*, p. 30.

<sup>18</sup> Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p.222.



when Muslim statesmen do not “ask” for outside help, to put it in Jackson’s terms, and make moral assessments on their own, they do it according to standards generally accepted by the Muslim society and its ideational resources.

According to this argument, if we “look at” the intentional action equation of a Muslim statesman, we should find the belief/identity side filled with more than bits and pieces of corporate culture, but also Islamic norms and principles. If international culture and adjacent international norms are to construct this part of the equation then they should “argue” with these norms and principles. This is, at least partly, where moral assessment takes place.

The other way to bring in ideational resources of Islamic society as basis for assessing international norms is to recall the ontological construction of political *Estekhlaf*, which as a legal and institutional framework is given shape through a chain of accountability and authorization originating from *Allah* (SWT) *Almostakhlef*, passing by the Islamic society, *Almostakhlaf laho*, before making its way to Muslim statesmen, *Almostakhlaf*, and back again. An outside example to understand how this chain requires moral assessment to pass by the approval of society is the idea of forgiveness in Islam. In Islam, sins are of two types, one that is directed towards *Allah* (SWT), for example drinking alcohol, missing the noon prayers, or not fasting during Ramadan. The other involves another human agent/agents, like theft, betrayal, rudeness, etc. The former type of sins only need the “sinner” to repent to *Allah* (SWT) and the sin is forgiven. Forgiveness of the latter, however, requires the approval of the one who was subject to the sin. That is when/ if the sinner repents and ask for forgiveness from *Allah* (SWT), *Allah* (SWT) will refer this “request” to the one subject to the sin. If he does not forgive, then no amount of prayers to *Allah* (SWT) can help. Likewise, the satisfaction of the mission of *Estekhlaf* by the Muslim statesman has to pass by the approval of the Muslim society. This chain

of approval however has to take place within the elements of *Estekhlaf: Tawhid, Tazkiyah, and Omran*, that is, argument/counter arguments, claims for Islamic higher values, the relationship between those higher values and international norms, and the appropriateness of “foreign” norms to satisfying the needs and wants of the Muslim society should be debated within the guidelines of *Estekhlaf*.

While both ways demonstrate how the ideational resources of the Islamic society feature in the moral assessment of international norms, the former treats those ideational resources as norms and principles that come to define the identity and interests of Muslims statesmen and further guide their behavior when making a moral assessment of international norms. Ideational resources in this case make their presence through the Muslim statesmen embodying them; they fit Migdal and Shil’s description of a “group of persons who acquire their significance by their embodiment of values, which transcend them, and by their conformity with standards and rules from which they derive their dignity”.<sup>19</sup> The latter, on the other hand, treats ideational resources as a property of Islamic public opinion, social actors and different institutions within the Islamic society that make their presence felt through political, social and cultural debates between different actors within the Islamic state-society complex. It captures the dynamics and complexity of making this moral assessment, which will necessarily involve argumentation, making counter normative claims and different interpretation of both international norms and Islamic values. This two-level assignment of moral assessment ensures that whether the research focus is on the institutional level or the totality of the Islamic state-society complex, ideational resources of the Muslim society are always present, covering both channels of internalization as Koh articulates them: political internalization and social internalization.

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<sup>19</sup> Joel S. Migdal, ‘State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another’, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). p.6.

Moreover, the second way of assigning moral assessment to the ideational resources of the Muslim society, does not entirely replace but reclaim considerable theoretical and normative ground from the liberal pluralist image of society where what is being debated is “interest” not “identity”. Indeed, for a state-society complex that has internalized the moral purpose of the modern individual and the liberal standards of sovereignty, there is no need to go deeper than the level of constructing interest among interests groups, coalitions and representatives of business communities. Yet, when an international norm enters an Islamic state-society complex that is defined by political *Estekhlaf* moral assessment and associated debates take place at the ideational level. This calls for moral assessment of international norms to take place at the level of problematizing and denaturalizing many of the most prominent western norms such as those of market exchange and individualism. The fact remains, however, that statesmen are not “sociologists”, nor IR theorists in that respect. In this light, making a moral assessment at this ideational level should not come solely from businesspeople, environmentalists or even human rights advocates. Instead, what is needed is individuals and institutions who can operate at the same level of the productive power of the “modern individual”, those who can produce Islamic systems of knowledge that can assess liberalism and modernism which gave rise to the hegemonic moral purpose of the state and liberal standards of sovereignty as a family of values constituting the field of appropriateness in the modern international society. In short, what is needed is scholars and academic institutions.

Fortunately, however, it is society that determines the guardians of its culture.<sup>20</sup> Those “guardians” are located in different institutions within the state-society complex including, media, publishing world, think tanks, etc. although according to Vendulka Kubalkova, it is the

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<sup>20</sup> Vendulka Kubalkova, ‘Reconstructing the Discipline: Scholars as agents’, in Vendulka Kubalkova, Nickolas Onuf, and Paul Kowert, ‘International Relations in a Constructed World’, (M.E. Sharpe, 1998) p.194.

“educational system that is charged with the analysis, and codification of rules, and norms, and with their legitimization, justification, elucidation, and explication.”<sup>21</sup> She elaborates further, “if universities do not help to make sense of the world, where else do policy makers turn.”<sup>22</sup> Subsequently, university professors as both scholars and teachers should be called upon to rationalize their culture,<sup>23</sup> or in our case, irrationalize a penetrating culture. This places scholars, universities and various educational institutions within the “public” as guardians of the ideational resources of society and utilizers of those resources as bases for moral assessment of international norms. Of course this could bring criticism from different directions, one criticism can come from those who emphasize “rules” that keep universities away from “real life”, another is methodological that emphasizes the levels of analysis as a specialized device capturing only vertical links of certain arrangements, specifically political arrangements, beside of course, a criticism that comes from the “Ivory tower”: “How dare you place us among the public”?

The first criticism could be answered through recognition that the rules that keep educational systems away from “real life” are mostly western,<sup>24</sup> and subsequently the gap between policy makers and scholars might not be desired in other parts of the world. In a way, these rules are based on a “worst case scenario”, one that assumes that universities and scholars will be overwhelmed by power from the outside. Although a possibility, one cannot omit the added value of productive power that universities and scholars hold, in term of re-describing the world from an Islamic perspective, and deprive statesmen from, arguably, the most important ideational resource when making a moral assessment. This discussion necessarily brings to mind issues of Islamic authority concerning moral assessment including “irrationalizing a penetrating culture”

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<sup>21</sup> Kubalkova, *Scholars as Agents*, p.194.

<sup>22</sup> Kubalkova, *Scholars as Agents*, p.194.

<sup>23</sup> Kubalkova, *Scholars as Agents*, p.195.

<sup>24</sup> Kubalkova, *Scholars as Agents*, p.195.

or preserving “standards generally accepted to Muslim society”. The way the two schemas of how the ideational resources of the Islamic society brought to feature in the moral assessment of international norms just mentioned above suggests that this moral authority lies with the Muslim society; and further given institutional edge by its linkage to the identity and interests of statesmen within state institutional structures on the one hand, and specialized knowledge through Muslim scholars who are better equipped with knowledge necessary to turn ideational resources of society into activities of legitimization, justification, elucidation, and explication of rules and norms. *Estekhlaf* and its chains of authorization and accountability ensure that while authority for making moral assessment is diffused through different political, academic, and religious institutions that are located within different conjectures within the Islamic state-Society complex, moral authority remains a property of the Muslim society as a whole. This can be emphasized by recalling the chains of *Estkehlaf*, the most basic of which is that between Allah (SWT), *Almostakhlef*, and the Muslim society who are responsible for choosing who lead their mission of *Estkehlaf*. Moreover, the second schema of bringing the ideational resources of society to feature in the moral assessment of international norms shows that this process is not direct and linear but one that involves political, social and cultural debates, argumentation, making counter normative claims and different interpretation of both international norms and Islamic values among different arbiters of Islamic sources including traditional religious class, religious bureaucrats, and Islamic movements and intellectuals. This further demonstrates that moral authority is rather diffused within the Islamic-society and not invisible.

To clarify further, this *Estekhlaf* based model of linking the ideational resources of the Muslim society to the moral assessment of international norms could be contrasted to the theory of governmentality, an argument associated with the French theorist Michel Foucault and

developed by governmentality scholars in Anglophone sociology to account for the complex techniques used to manage populations and regulate social conduct.<sup>25</sup> Wendt and Duvall argue that a constitutive feature of modern governmentality is that its discourses are scientific. Which means that science and the state are today deeply intermeshed. Through science the state makes its subjects and objects known, and through the state science acquires institutional support and prestige.<sup>26</sup> Here, authority is invisible, or made invisible, by the state-science alliance while in a framework of *Estekhlaf* there is clear placement of authority with the Muslim society which then authorizes both statesmen and scholars, whose activities are viewed as part of the collective mission of *Estekhlaf*. Moreover, when governmentality is given a global application as Jonathan Joseph does in his book *The Social in the Global: Social Theory, Governmentality, and Global Politics*, an Islamic response should utilize ideational resources by emphasizing diffusion of those resources throughout the Islamic state-society complex in order to “face” the international norms, diffused through liberal governmentality.

This takes us to the methodological concern which could be referred to the proposed version of levels of analysis developed in chapter four, which while articulating micro-macro links all the way to the “structural slot” of member of international society, does not leave behind the ideational resources of society, even giving them an institutional space. As demonstrated, the top sub-level of the Islamic state-society complex level was occupied by different types of political, cultural, social and academic institutions and corporations that embody Islamic values and norms, one of which is educational institutions. To clarify, regardless of the specific arrangements that a given version of the levels of analysis captures whether political, cultural,

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<sup>25</sup> Jonathan Joseph, *The Social in the Global: Social Theory, Governmentality, and Global Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander Wendt and Raymond Duvall, “Sovereignty and the UFO”, *Political Theory*, Vol. 36, No.4 (August 2008) p.619.

economic, or academic the bottom level of the Islamic state-society complex is always there. It is only at the second level up that we can speak of different arrangements. This articulation ensures that different Islamic institutions emerge out of the Islamic state society-complex and remove the sharp borders between different arrangements by showing that they share the same normative base.

This methodological linkage is also an expression of normative balance that should be maintained in attempts at capturing the possibility of internalization; remember that international norms do not stop at the level of the institutional state, but penetrate further to the level of state-society complex to re-construct micro meanings and understandings of the individual in accordance with modernity's understandings. It is only fair, then, to utilize and operationalize ideational resources beyond the institutional state and political arrangements, the most important of which are those of scholars and educational institutions.

The third concern, which has to do with what could be thought of as “downgrading” the standing of scholars by viewing them as a segment of public opinion, is unwarranted. Scholars still occupy a privileged space within the Islamic public sphere and play a leading role as active social actors. On the one hand, their placement in the public sphere defies the popular assumption, especially within the literature of foreign policy analysis that the public opinion is easily manipulated.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, they can ensure that demands of public opinion are “realistic” in terms of taking account of material, relational and inter-subjective dimensions that might constrain the actions of Muslim statesmen. As mentioned in chapter two, no group of individuals is more burdened with observing “modesty” within Islamic society than scholars.

Given the image of the Muslim IR researcher articulated in chapter two, leading the Islamic

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<sup>27</sup> Thomas Risse, ‘Public Opinion, Domestic Structure, And Foreign Policy in Liberal Democracies’, *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 04 (July 1991), p.480.

society in offering moral assessment and serving as a guardian of Islamic culture should not be viewed as a downgrading of his social role. Remember that the Muslim IR researcher is also a *Khalifah*, only filling or embodying the social role of “IR researcher”, which means that he is morally responsible for his work before *Allah* (SWT), and, through the chain of accountability and authorization, before the Muslim society. This means that the Muslim IR researcher is not an agent of an academic institution, but of the Islamic state-society complex, just like the Muslim statesman. Another alternative is to be solely an agent of a global discipline, entering into a cycle of producing a type of knowledge that policymakers react to in a manner that Joseph Nye explains in the following terms “not a few policy specialists exposed to the scholarly literature have concluded that most university professors seem to write largely for one another and have little inclination or ability to communicate their knowledge in terms comprehensible to policymakers”.<sup>28</sup> He elaborates further: “young scholars are rated and promoted by their contributions to refereed academic journals ... They get little credit for contributions to policy journals edited for a broader audience”.<sup>29</sup> This career structure effectively gives them very little role in utilizing and diffusing ideational resources as a basis for moral assessment within the Islamic state-society complex.

To conclude, Islamic society’s ideational resources make their presence felt in the moral assessment stage of Islamic action in two ways. The first is as norms and principles embodied by Muslim statesmen as agents of the totality of the Islamic state-society complex. The second is through debates, agreements and consultations among political and social actors within the Islamic state society complex. In this light, the former could be said to be constitutive of the

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<sup>28</sup> Joseph Nye, ‘International Relations: The Relevance of Theory to Practice’, in Christian Reus-Smit, and Duncan Snidal (eds.) *The Oxford handbook of International Relations*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) p. 655.

<sup>29</sup> Nye, *The Relevance of Theory to Practice*, p.655.



identity and interest of the Muslims statesman, while the latter could be said to be causal in the sense of ideational resources affecting the behavior of Muslim statesmen. This takes us to the relationship between the, thus far, two elements of Islamic agential action in international relations, namely, reflexivity of intentional Muslim statesmen located within the institutional state, and moral assessment drawn from the ideational resources of the Muslim society. This relationship can be understood as follows: firstly, the ideational resources of society are translated into a basis for moral assessment of international norms at the state level via intentional human agents within the institutional state who, in virtue of their placement therein, can reason and justify the outcomes of these moral assessments, to members of international society. Secondly, statesmen direct their intentionality away from the prevailing culture in the modern international society and utilize the capacity of reflexivity towards *Estekhlaf*. They need to escape the ideational space of state/international system, and draw moral assessment from beyond the modern international society, since by definition, reflexivity, or the substance of which, must come from outside the system. In this light, constant reminders and displays of symbols and rituals from the Muslim society will be needed for reflexivity to “kick in” before “recognizing” and then ending one’s contribution to the self-fulfilling prophecy that underlies the reproduction of the hegemonic moral purpose of the state and liberal standards of sovereignty.

### ***The Moral Test of Activating the Causal Powers of the State***

Once a moral assessment is reached and a decision on the spectrum of rejection/internalization of an international norm is agreed upon among actors within the Islamic state-society complex who can carry the burden of ethical reasoning for such decision, then the effort to capture Islamic agency in international relations should move from locating moral responsibility to one of locating causal responsibility. In terms of the reconfigured levels of analysis, we are now moving

to the top sub-level within the level of the institutional state, namely, the corporation/institutional sub-level. That is where the activation of the causal powers inscribed within the structures of the state takes place. To recall, Manjoud's framework was complemented with Wight's notion of the state as a structure that does not exercise power, but facilitates the exercise of power by agents, and that the powers of the state are only ever activated through those agents. Subsequently, when we talk of the power of the state we should refer to the various state capacities inscribed in it as an institutional and organizational ensemble.<sup>30</sup> Wight's insistence on critical realist principles like conceding to the state causal power "greater" than the sum of individual statesmen, and the necessity of the presence of human agents to activate those powers were taken seriously when reconfiguring the levels of analysis in chapter four, as shown by the sub-levels of the institutional state where human agents occupy the bottom sub-level while causal powers of the state take form at the top sub-level of the institutional state. The next move is to explore how this activation of states' causal power can be translated into "making an effective normative claim" at the international level, yet, one that is based on Islamic criterion for moral assessment, which are in turn "drawn" from the ideational resources of the Islamic society.

Again, in Wendt's terms, "recognition" has already been achieved by allocating reflexivity to statesmen, and given substance by ideational resources of Islamic society. "Ending" or making a unique contribution to the culture of the modern international society, however, needs the activation of the causal powers of the state in order to take a normative claim or moral assessment to the international level; that is, to make contact with the structures of the modern international society. To be sure, "ending" contribution to the hegemonic moral purpose of the state and liberal standards of sovereignty does not seem an immediate possibility. Rather, we

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<sup>30</sup> Wight, *Politics as Ontology*, p.220.

should speak of reproduction/transformation instead, which also better fits the ontological properties of social activity as captured by Bhaskar's transformational model. Within this model, it was emphasized that for the reproductive/transformational quality of agential action to be realized, social roles as points of contact were necessary in order for agential actions to be linked to structures. This means that what we are after at this stage is a causal effort, not a moral one. Minus this effort, the ideational resources of various institutions of the Islamic society and the sum of activities of intentional and reflective Muslim statesmen cannot "reach" those structures. It is an effort of activating the causal powers of the state that takes Islamic moral feedback to the inter-subjective, the relational and material planes of the modern international society.

In virtue of occupying a space within the totality of the Islamic state-society complex, the institutional state enjoys certain powers inscribed in its structures that come from authorization and institutionalization that, in turn, allow human agents embedded within to extract and mobilize both material and ideational resources from the wider Islamic state-society complex in order to make effective demands on macro arrangements like the modern international society. Conversely, by filling and assuming the role of "member of international society" the institutional state gives the same statesmen another set of causal powers, this time internationally derived powers. In this context, activation of the causal powers could mean the capacity to utilize and mobilize the material and ideational resources of the Islamic-state-society complex to feature within different institutional arrangements and activities like signing international agreements or voting within international bodies, and even building and designing international regimes. These might be viewed as minimal powers given the complexity and richness of the normative structure of the modern international society. Remember, however, that the Organization of Islamic Cooperation presently has fifty nine members, fifty seven of which have Muslim majority

populations. If they choose to mobilize the ideational resources of their societies or Muslim majorities, and morally assess international norms accordingly, they can, indeed, *cause* serious changes in the international norm life cycle. Activation of the causal powers of the institutional state, then, should be understood in terms of the institutional effectiveness of mobilizing and extracting ideational resources of the Islamic society and communicating Islamic based moral assessment to the international level.

Moreover, given that this activation is, on the one hand, performed by intentional statesmen, and, on the other, is linked to the planes of social activity of the international level it necessarily involves issues of both direction and substance.

Direction here could mean two things, first, is directing action and, by extension, the causal powers of the state towards satisfaction of the inter-subjective guidelines that come with the role of “member of the international society” or alternatively towards the satisfaction of the moral guidelines and resources of the Islamic state-Society Complex. Secondly, direction could imply management of Islamic response to international normative demands and their associated mechanisms. For example, when international constraints come mainly from the inter-subjective plane of social activity, then activation in terms of mobilizing the resources of the Islamic state-society complex will be directed towards its ideational resources. When other members of international society move to sanctions and coercion, and constraints start to come from the material plane of social activity, then the activation of the powers of the institutional state will move accordingly, to mobilize the material sources within the Islamic state-society complex. It should be noted, however, that the causal powers of the institutional state do not have the quality of direction by itself, but are given this quality when intentional agents activate them in accordance with the direction of their intentionality. As mentioned in section one of this chapter,

intentionality is partly about directedness and since intentionality is a property of human agents alone the causal powers of the institutional state can only be directed through their intentional actions.

The overall image might resemble one of two-level games, where in virtue of its placement and linkage within both the Islamic-state society complex and the modern international society, powers inscribed in the structure of the institutional state come from both fields. In this sense activation might be viewed as satisfying the requirements of, and hence reproducing the links with, those two sources of power. Yet, this activation can only take place through human agents. At this level, the human agent is a *Mostakhlaf*, as articulated by the chain of political *Estekhlaf*, which passes through the approval of the Islamic society all the way to *Allah (SWT)*. Once he puts on a suit and a silk tie, however, he is a statesman and political leader of a member of the modern international society. Had we allocated agency solely to the state as in the case with mainstream western IR theory, we would have still captured sources of causal powers at the institutional state, although in a raw sense, with no direction or aim other than, possibly, the unintentional reproduction of the hegemonic moral purpose of the state and liberal sovereignty. Equally important, we would have missed this “moment” of interaction between moral responsibility and causal responsibility, or what can be called “the moral test of activating the casual powers of the state”. Instead, placing a human agent within the institutional state level in order to activate its powers while insisting on his intentionality and reflexivity along with the norms and principles “learned” within the Islamic society complex better captures this moment that should not be overlooked when capturing Islamic agency in international relations.

***Conclusion:***

It is important to keep in mind why this thesis has taken the extra effort of de-assembling the Islamic state-society complex. The reason is to distinguish between two dimensions that should feature in understanding Islamic agency in international relations; moral responsibility and causal responsibility. This provides the basis for ontological clarity in assigning reflexivity, moral assessment and the causal powers of communicating this moral assessment to the modern international society. Furthermore, this should assist research on Islamic agency and action in international relations to allocate research problems to the relevant theoretical space as articulated by the reconfigured version of analysis. Research problems usually involve locating responsibility, whether causal or moral. As mentioned before, western mainstream IR theory principally searches for the former, while traditional Islamic knowledge usually looks for the latter. This work, however, has been sustained by the assumption that some research problems are better served through exploring sources of causal responsibility, while others can better be tackled by exploring the role and responsibility of moral agents. The contribution this thesis hopes to make is to allow both efforts to function on the same ontological and theoretical grounds by opening channels between sources of moral and causal responsibility, allowing researchers to bracket/de-bracket, and then link/delink those sources while preserving a coherent and intact image of Islamic agency in international relations.

In terms of causal responsibility this framework directs attention to powers and capacities of the institutional state as a corporate entity. Here, bracketing human agency within the institutional state might be needed for research to proceed, as long as no “human” properties and tasks are transferred to the state during the course of this temporary phase of bracketing. Instead, we should focus on the institutional makeup of the state and powers inscribed in its structures (endogenous factors), and its links with both the totality of the Islamic state-society complex and

the modern international society (exogenous factors). Such research focus could be directed to answer questions like: “Given that an Islamic moral assessment has been reached, why it has/not been communicated effectively to the international level?” This, at least initially, does not call for human elements of agency, rather intention should be directed towards, first, the institutional capacity of the state to “draw” from ideational resources of the society, which is, in effect, an issue of capacity-building and institutional design that might enhance the causal powers of the state in putting effective normative claims to the international level. Secondly, the question points towards the international conditions of production that can constrain or facilitate the causal powers of the institutional state. Likewise, bracketing can also take place at the international level; given that the research is concerned with causal responsibility then a focus on the material and relational planes of social activity can yield better findings than a focus on the inter-subjective plane of social activity. Here, along with bracketing sources of Islamic moral assessment, we are also bracketing the hegemonic moral purpose of the state and standards of liberal sovereignty, which formulates the problem as one of exploring the interaction between the causal powers of the institutional state within the Islamic state-society complex and the conditions of production that come from the international relational and material planes of social activity.

Acknowledgement of bracketing of the ideational context including the ideational resources of the Islamic state-society complex (Estekhlaf) and the international inter-subjective/ideational plane of social activity (hegemonic moral purpose of the state and liberal standards of sovereignty) should be made clear, however, when focusing on the causal responsibility at the state level and the material and relational planes of social activity at the international level. This acknowledgement of bracketing should also include a clear idea of how the findings on causal

responsibility on the state level will be integrated with moral responsibility of statesmen, and how the material and relational planes of social activity at the international level will be integrated with the ideational plane of social activity. In other words, such research focus should acknowledge that causal relationships, status, rank, hierarchal relationships, material constraints and patterns of power relations are part of an ideational struggle between an Islamic state-society complex defined by Estekhlaf, and a modern social arrangement, that is, the international society, defined by a hegemonic moral purpose and liberal standards of sovereignty. Conversely, a focus on this ideational context should be followed by an effort of explicating the relational and material dimensions of this ideational struggle.

The case for integrating casual and moral responsibilities can be made by emphasizing that causality does not only involve “effectiveness”, but also direction as mentioned in the last section. Direction calls for intentionality, and intentionality is a property of human agents alone, who are the only ontological “entity” capable of utilizing intentionality into a habit of reflexivity that transcends state structures to draw from the ideational resources of society before directing the casual powers of the state accordingly, which effectively links causal responsibility to moral responsibility. In other words, the institutional state does enjoy causal powers that should be the focus of research problems, but the activation of those causal powers is moral responsibility that should also be the focus of research problems.

Integrations, or re-integration, of planes of social activities at the international level can be defended ontologically through Wight’s conceptualization of structure as links between planes of social activity. Theoretically, recalling the stratifactory nature of sovereignty in the modern international society and the material base of the hegemonic moral purpose of the state can give guidance to this re-integration. Moreover, links that can serve bracketing, de-bracketing, and re-



integration of findings, vertically, across the levels are also provided for. On the ontological level, Bhaskar's transformational model of social activity, and theoretically, the association of the hegemonic moral purpose of the state with certain understandings of individuality open clear macro-micro channels between international planes of social activities on the one hand, and agential moral and causal responsibilities on the other hand.

The reconfigured version of levels of analysis should give us an appropriate and coherent ontological terrain where these methodological maneuvers can be undertaken. The levels appear as Onuf's rightly call them "levels of being" where the story of an Islamic state-society complex pursuing the mission of *Estekhlaf* through embedment in the modern international society can be told. It is a story that involves micro human feelings of hope, shame, fear, love, as much as it involves macro causal links among institutions and structures. For the story to be told correctly it needs our main actor, the *Khalifah* embodying the social role of a "statesman" to enjoy reflexivity and awareness of his context, if the intensity of the structural forces of the modern international society clouds his intentionality, then "outside" help from the Islamic society, including Muslim IR researchers and scholars can be provided. This suggests that the Muslim IR researcher is not just a "story teller", but by telling the story from an Islamic perspective and communicating with the main actor, he becomes part of the story. It is essential that our main actor understands the plot, that is, whenever the powers of the institutional state are activated in a direction of satisfying the mission of *Estekhlaf*, the totality of the Islamic state-society might lose ground on the relational plane of social activity in relation to other members of the international society, which in turn affects reproductive/transformational powers in making future Islamic normative claims. Yet, according to Islamic faith, they gain ground on the relational plane of the superstructure of *Estekhlaf* which links them to *Allah* (SWT) where the modern international

society is only one arrangement of one of its elements. It is indeed a matter of faith...but then...this is the whole point!

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