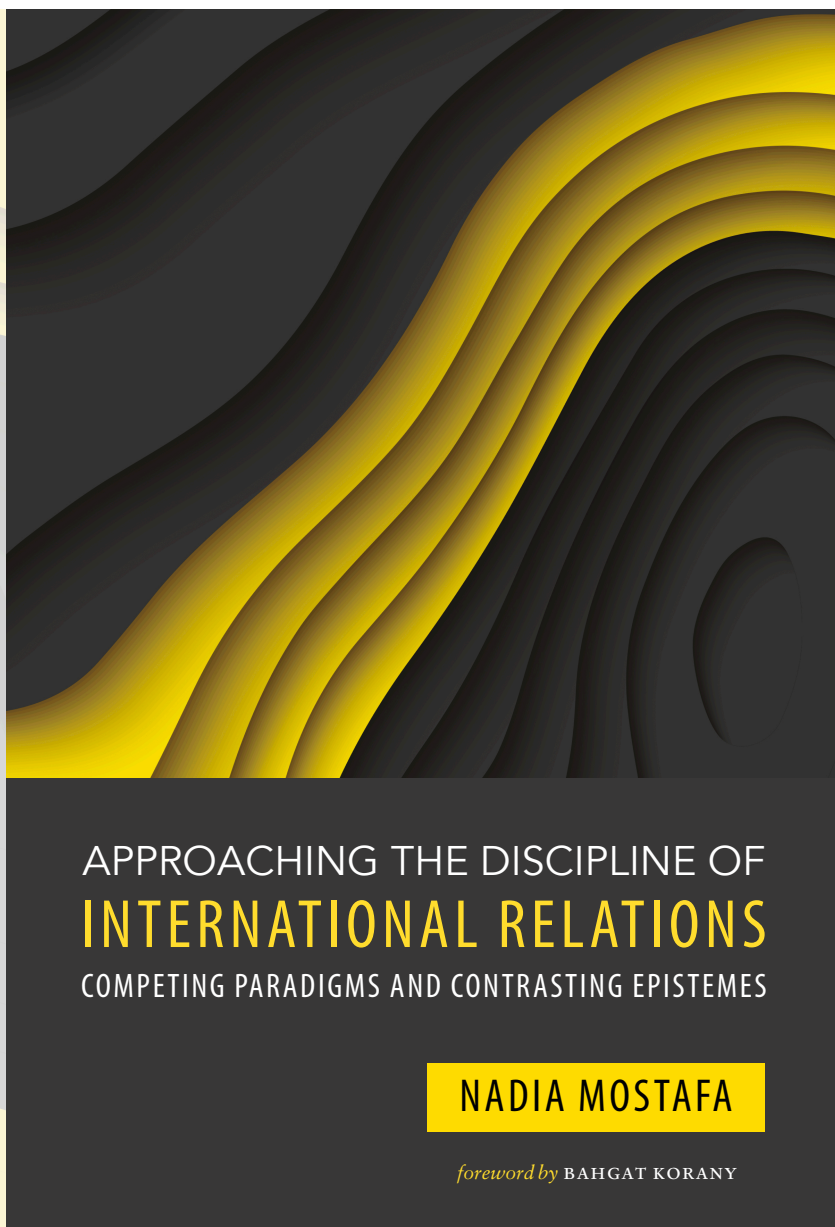


# *Approaching the Discipline of International Relations*

Competing Paradigms and  
Contrasting Epistemes



APPROACHING THE DISCIPLINE OF  
**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**  
COMPETING PARADIGMS AND CONTRASTING EPISTEMES

**NADIA MOSTAFA**

*foreword by* BAHGAT KORANY

IIIT Books-In-Brief Series

# APPROACHING THE DISCIPLINE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Competing Paradigms and Contrasting Epistemes

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*Approaching the Discipline of International Relations: Competing Paradigms and Contrasting Epistemes* attempts to present an Islamic paradigm of International Relations, exploring historical developments and dominant paradigms intrinsic to the discipline of IR as studied from a Euro-centric, Western perspective, and to question their efficacy in relation to the socio-economic-religious realities and context of the Muslim world which are in dire need of change. Terminologies and concepts such as Ummah are developed as integral aspects of an Islamic Paradigm of International Relations theory, with premises rooted in the foundational sources of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

In constructing an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm of International Relations the author simultaneously challenges the place that Islam broadly occupies within secular paradigms currently dominating IR theory in academia and explores the type of research questions and analysis that need to be addressed for an Islamic paradigm to have a viable future.

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## PART I: INTRODUCTION: THEORIZING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

As much as this study captures the development of the discipline of International Relations up to its present state, it also presents a critical engagement with the discipline from within, it inquires into matters pertaining to the pedagogy, content, and learning methods in the discipline, raising, thereby, multiple questions: How is IR being taught? What is being taught in IR? How can IR be studied? What is the content of IR that needs to be studied? Put differently, this study attempts to inductively reveal the diversity and multiplicity prevalent in IR. By unraveling the aspects and depth of the revision process that the dominant IR theory has undergone, this study sets the stage for introducing the experience of a (non-Western) Islamic civilizational paradigm in IR. Thus, the overarching purpose and aim of this study justifies its approach to the state of the field.

### Chapter One

## **PATTERNS OF THEORIZING AND REASONS FOR THEORETICAL DIVERSITY AND PLURALITY**

During the pinnacle period of the behavioralist school in the 1960s and 1970s, IR literature focused on defining theories according to their patterns, types, and criteria of classification. As for post-behavioralist literature, it paid attention to the importance of theorizing and the distinction between theories and paradigms, using, in the process, paradigms (or the distinction between grand and small theories) as an approach to depict the evolution of the discipline. By the end of the twentieth century, a state of methodological and theoretical fluidity dominated the field of IR as a consequence of a sharp increase in the number of writings and publications on theory.

The evolution of the discipline of International Relations over more than fifty years has been deeply attached to the changes and transformations at the international and global levels. Theory can, therefore, be regarded as a product and theorizing as a multi-level process that produces diverse theoretical products, which differ in their epistemological, ontological, and methodological aspects – aspects that lie at the heart of the philosophy of science and the theory of knowledge (the nature, origin, and scope of knowledge).

Hence, there are multiple approaches to the study of IR Theory and various ways to comprehend the conception and significance of theorizing. Therefore, I argue that a good starting point when teaching – or conducting research in – IR Theory, and IR in general, is to raise at least two fundamental questions: What is the essence and significance of “theory”? How is theory related to reality?

These questions serve different important goals: first, to introduce the essence of theorizing as an ongoing process and, secondly, to discuss the development of the discipline and reasons behind that development. One important conclusion out of this should be that science is not rigid. That is why a “methodological introduction” to the study at hand seeks to provide answers to these questions and to explain why it is important to raise these questions to begin with. Suggested here is that all theoretical courses should address these or similar questions.

Considering my teaching experience over the past two decades, I believe that the need for raising these questions is mainly justifiable by what can be described as students’ “weak and confused methodological awareness”; one which is clearly manifest in the following:

- A dominant belief among Arab and Muslim students that science is a Western universal achievement, and that we, Arabs and Muslims, are mere consumers of this science, because we did not, and cannot, produce scientific knowledge.
- A weak general awareness of the significance of theoretical study, whether from Western or non-Western perspectives, thus undermining the role of theory in depicting, understanding, explaining, and coping with the changing realities of the world.
- A lack of comparative critical sensibility, which results in the failure to raise questions such as: Why do theories differ? What is meant by objectivity or bias? Are academic perspectives necessarily unbiased? When does a certain paradigm or theory become dominant?

Is it possible to introduce theoretical contributions from non-Western perspectives? What kind of contributions can these be?

- An inability to relate “theories” to real “issues” of IR; that is, the lack of awareness that science serves “a function or several functions” and that non-Western civilizational circles can also produce useful knowledge.

This impression about the students’ lack of methodological awareness has been stimulated, shaped, and consolidated over many years of teaching and interaction with graduate and postgraduate students at Cairo University, a conclusion usually arrived at after asking them a set of inductive questions.

In the study at hand, four fundamental methodological steps are suggested to answer the aforementioned questions in a way that allows for the promotion of the theoretical awareness pre-required for a systematic, critical, and pluralist academic study of IR from comparative civilizational paradigms. These four steps will be addressed in the following four major points, throughout Chapters 1 and 2: *first*, the essence and significance of theorizing; *second*, the differences between theoretical frameworks and the significance of the paradigm debates approach; *third*, the essence of contrasting epistemes; and *fourth*, the impact of epistemological differences on theorizing.

### 1.1 The Essence and Significance of Theorizing

When I ask my students how they see and describe ongoing global events, I do so driven by a belief that an inductive approach allows them to understand the meaning and significance of theorizing and how it is conducted. Students provide different definitions of international relations and describe the state of the world in variant ways. Their answers draw attention to aspects that need to be highlighted while teaching. Here, I draw on James Rosenau who made a distinct contribution in this regard. According to Rosenau, world affairs are complex, and they change at a rapid pace, especially during periods of transformation. This makes it difficult, and even impossible, to comprehend all that is going on in the world, especially as it involves multiple actors and various patterns of cooperative and conflictual relations and interactions, let alone a plethora of global issues with infinite details (military, economic, cultural, etc.). This makes change the sole invariable truth in our world, and the only way to overcome the difficulties associated with this fact is through theorizing and

theory-making. Literally, everyone engages in a theorizing process, once one observes world affairs. One finds oneself forced to make choices and to select the most important details to be observed (according to one's own preferences), while eliminating others. According to Rosenau, the selection process associated with observation is the first stage of theorizing, because selections are not made randomly, but are based on the observer's perception of what is meaningful. Yet, mere observation is insufficient for theorizing. Explanation is an essential second stage of theorizing and it requires two further subsequent steps to be taken: (1) Asking what does the observed signify?; and (2) Contemplation and verification that help upgrade the product of theorizing in such a way as to give it an explanatory capacity. These two steps lead, hence, to more abstraction.

The transition from observation to conclusion and explanation means that historical facts and current events remain void of any inherent meaning, until we give them meaning. This is, according to Rosenau, what theorizing is all about; to reach broad meanings, generalizations, and rules by focusing on specific events. It is, therefore, important that scholars reveal their theoretical background. This makes it possible for them to identify sources of error in case later developments in reality invalidate their findings or explanations.

Rosenau's major argument is that theorizing is a reflection of reality, and that there is no such thing as unbiased theorizing. Observers of the same events make different assumptions and arrive at different conclusions. Each of them has their own experience that affects their choices, preferences, definitions and, accordingly, the explanations one suggests. Rosenau argues also that the highest level of abstraction in the theorizing process is the level at which an all-inclusive paradigm emerges; one that integrates various theories and offers a general explanation of causes and effects. For example, many theories are derived from the realist or the pluralist paradigms, they all share the main givens, hypotheses, and assumptions adopted by their corresponding paradigms. These paradigms are closed intellectual systems that do not collapse when a few examples contradict their basic logical assumptions.

In short, Rosenau argues that adopting a certain paradigm helps researchers give meaning to ongoing world developments. Hence, debates between the proponents of different paradigms, when explaining the same phenomenon, become inevitable. Rosenau believes

that paradigms guide scholars through the processes of asking questions and finding answers. If a researcher is not aware of the necessity of abiding by a paradigm, they will be the victim of endless confusion and distraction. By giving attention to everything, the researcher becomes incapable of extracting any meaning from a permanently chaotic international scene.

Although advocating the essentiality of paradigms, Rosenau concludes, in defense of a pluralist perspective, that no single paradigm is true, while others are false, and that no paradigm is better than others. Rather, in some cases, some paradigms merely seem to be more useful than others, depending on the hypotheses that need to be tested.

Besides, different ways of understanding and explaining reveal differences between theoretical frameworks. One of the main teaching approaches to explaining theoretical diversity and the relationship between theory and reality is to ask students questions about the possible explanations of specific historical or current events, such as: How can the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union be explained? How can the Second Gulf War (the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait) be explained? How can the war in the Balkans be explained? How can the 9/11 events be explained?

It is useful to note that critical theorists – as will be further elaborated on in Part III – offer a totally different understanding of theorizing. On the one hand, they consider reality to be a reflection of the researcher's ideas, perspectives, and values. Hence, to them, developing different perspectives on “reality” is not a matter of paying attention to different aspects of a complex phenomenon or emphasizing certain details, while leaving out others. Rather, different perspectives on reality are the product of a disagreement on the existence of this reality, both in its entirety and in all its details. On the other hand, they consider dominant thought and theory to be a direct derivative of authority and power balances. Therefore, theorizing is not only a matter of finding better ways to understand reality and to solve its problems with the help of a theoretical framework, nor is it a matter of distinguishing between correct or false paradigms. Rather, it is a matter of understanding how theorizing reflects the practical goals of the centers of power and authority and serves their interests.

## 1.2 Paradigms and The Paradigm Debates As An Approach to the Study of IR Theory

“Paradigm,” “school of thought,” “perspective,” and “image” are all vocabulary used interchangeably when addressing pre-theory, or what is also sometimes referred to as grand theories. Ever since the establishment of the discipline, the history of theorizing in IR has been approached in different ways, and one of them is the approach of “paradigms” and the paradigms’ great debates.

A paradigm is a dominant perspective on the nature of international phenomena as perceived and described by most theorists during each of the phases of the development of IR. It indicates a common stance on the main characteristics and aspects of international phenomena, on the questions to be raised, and the ways in which international phenomena need to be addressed. Some scholars, like Rosenau, consider paradigms as a lens through which we look at the universe around us. They also argue that theorizing is the way to organize our comprehension and perception of the complex and overlapping issues of the international arena.

To other scholars, including Mona Abul-Fadl, approaching a discipline without having a paradigm is just like starting a tour without a guide or a map, because paradigms serve different functions: they determine what belongs to the discipline and what falls outside its scope, identify the most crucial issues that deserve to be subjected to analysis, determine the units of analysis, and set the relationship between values and reality. “Paradigms” have been used as tools to classify theorizing efforts in IR according to two criteria: (1) their fundamental ontological assumptions about the way in which the world is structured, and (2) their methodological assumptions, including the research methods and tools.

At different phases of the history of international politics, different major paradigms dominated the discipline of IR, before losing ground to some newly emerging paradigm that had directed its criticisms towards them. This succession has given rise to heated debates between the proponents of the major successive paradigms. That is because, due to their different epistemological, philosophical, and ontological foundations, paradigms come up with different answers to questions on the nature and methodology of IR. While some IR theorists emphasize the significance of the paradigm debates approach for

teaching or explaining the evolution of the discipline, others express reservations about this approach. Arguments of the advocates of a paradigm debates approach to IR can be summed up as follows:

- The paradigm debates approach is a tool for comparatively mapping perspectives and discussions; hence, it allows researchers to take stances and to select their own paradigm.
- Approaching the paradigm debates from a more holistic perspective, by reflecting on the similarities between apparently different paradigms, opens room for the introduction of new alternative paradigms whether they belong to the same or to a different epistemology.
- Emphasizing differences among paradigms explains the existence of different and multiple theories that tackle the same subject.
- In addition, this approach can help us answer important questions that might include the difference between theories of national interest, interest as derived from Shari‘ah (the Islamic law), and global interest or the difference between theories of jihad (to strive in the way of God,) theories of holy war, and theories of national wars.

The paradigm debates approach helps scholars to link international transformations to changes in theorizing; hence, it bridges the gap between theory and reality. That is why Rosenau and Smith believe that paradigms are not merely different perspectives on different worlds. To both, paradigms are different perspectives on specific aspects of the same world. These perspectives vary in importance and degree of endurance depending on the current global developments, which are also sophisticated, complex, and rapidly changing.

## Chapter Two

### **CONTRASTING EPISTEMES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THEORIZING**

Why do paradigms differ? Is it because they constitute different perspectives on the same world? Or is it because they constitute different perspectives on different worlds, as “the world” is not “out there” (i.e., it does not have a separate existence from those who seek to understand it)? The answer to the first question is in the affirmative



because of the ontological and methodological differences between the paradigms. The answer to the second question is also in the affirmative, because of the epistemological differences between the paradigms.

Of special significance is a comparison between the (Western) positivist epistemology and the normative value-based epistemology (including the Islamic epistemology). Therefore, introducing “the model of contrasting or comparative epistemes” to IR Theory responds to an interest in the impact of the theory and philosophy of science on knowledge production, an interest that has developed from inside as well as outside Western academic circles.

Whereas reflecting on the state of the field pre-necessitates introducing the concept of “paradigm,” speaking of schools that are critical of positivism in general and introducing a comparative Islamic Civilizational Paradigm in particular should go hand in hand with uncovering the impact of epistemes on IR. Students receive knowledge about political science in an academic milieu dominated by the positivist-realist paradigm. Their intellectual formation treats critical and Islamic knowledge, on the one hand, and positivist knowledge, on the other, as separate domains. This may explain their bewilderment and sense of alienation that I observe once I mention an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm of IR to them. In addition to that, there is a general weakness in the students’ consciousness of the significance of theoretical study in general, not to mention the lack of awareness of the importance of epistemes and how they are related to the philosophy of science and sources of knowledge and how they impact social and political theorizing (both positivist and critical) within the Western circles. This is because the philosophy of science and sources of knowledge do not only explain the differences between the contrasting civilizational paradigms (Western and Islamic), but they also initially explain the epistemological and methodological differences within the Western circle (secular positivist, non-positivist, and non-secular as well), as will be further elaborated in the third part of this study. Put differently, one cannot grasp the evolution of the discipline through the paradigms’ great debates approach (the three great debates, the competing paradigms debate, or the debate between Western versus non-Western paradigms) without understanding the fundamental causes and manifestations of epistemological differences, and not only the ontological and methodological differences between paradigms.

What is the meaning of “epistemology”? What are the most important

types of epistemes in political science (comparative or contrasting, competitive or alternative epistemes)? What are the main characteristics of each one of them? How do their differences influence the paradigms and theories of political science? I do not intend to dig deep into these epistemological aspects, as my purpose here is just to draw attention to their impact on theoretical plurality and diversity in IR.

In this regard, it is useful to refer to some studies that have clearly addressed the general methodological problems arising from the impact of different epistemes on comparative paradigms (Western and Islamic) in social sciences and humanities in general, and in IR in particular. These studies also reflect on some theoretical implications of these differences. They also underline the epistemological differences among the Western paradigms; positivist and critical, as the latter criticizes Western epistemological and theoretical centrism.

## 2.1 The Essence of Contrasting Epistemes

Here, I limit my analysis to the contributions of three Muslim scholars who directed their criticism to positivist Western thought and its implications for the nature, concepts, and paradigms of the discipline. Abul-Fadl defines an episteme as the basic values and beliefs on knowledge, existence, and their sources. She also defines a paradigm as the structure of dominant discourse regarding the cognitive and normative system that regulates the process of thinking in a specific field, thus setting the scope, boundaries, concepts, worldviews, beliefs, values, and theories of that specific field.

In “The Fiqh of Bias,” Abdelwahab Elmessiri perceives episteme as a set of implicit and explicit values embedded in the means of thinking and research. These values indicate human biases and personal inclinations and are, in turn, the result of a conscious (or unconscious) selection process where some values are embraced and others are excluded. Elmessiri believes that epistemes influence individual behavior, societal attitudes, and knowledge production. He uses an inductive and comparative methodology to gradually convey this definition to scholars and students so as to uncover “biases of science,” or the subjectivity of theorizing.

By calling the materialist, positivist episteme “Western,” Elmessiri seemed to be ignoring the outcomes of the revisionist attempts that had originated from within the West itself. It is worth noting, however, that

although these attempts have generated a non-materialist normative tendency critical of positivism, they remain in fact confined to a secular world view, and it is only over the last two decades that they have begun to become influential.

One might therefore argue that Mona Abul-Fadl's preoccupation with contrasting epistemes (almost coinciding with Elmessiri's preoccupation with bias in the early 1990s) was a more balanced and integrated contribution. Abul-Fadl's attempt at "contrasting epistemics" – without labelling one as Western and the other as Islamic – was significant because her approach of contrasting epistemes mainly focused on re-identifying the detailed characteristics of contemporary social theory in search of alternative perspectives to the dominant discourse. To Abul-Fadl, the contrasting epistemes refer to the Islamic *tawhīdī* episteme and the abstract secularist or "humanistic/naturalistic" episteme, where *tawhīd* refers to the assertion of the oneness of God.

In her approach, Abul-Fadl attempts to overcome the typical stereotype that advocates a complete dichotomy and an inevitable confrontation between a superior classical Evangelical West (Greek – Roman and Jewish – Christian) and an inferior Muslim East. Therefore, Abul-Fadl stresses the complex relationship between normative cultural systems and historical civilizational groups or types.

Ahmet Davutoğlu, while sharing the same epistemological stance of Mona Abul-Fadl, adopts also a critical attitude towards political science. His work provides a comparative analysis of Islamic and Western epistemes, revealing, thereby, the different influences that these two epistemes have on the construction of concepts and comparative theories in social sciences in general, and in political science in particular. He compares the two epistemes in terms of sources and characteristics. According to Davutoğlu, the positivist epistemology is based on the basic assumption that man is the master of the universe and its most important element. This epistemology stimulated the emergence of philosophies advocating the centrality of man in the universe and the centrality of nature; philosophies that were influenced by the ideas of Aristotle, Locke, and Kant on knowledge and reason leading to the outbreak of another epistemological-normative-social revolution in social and political theories.

Davutoğlu's main hypothesis maintains that conflict and discrepancies between Islamic and Western thought are not a result of mere historical

differences. They are mainly the outcome of their different philosophical, methodological, and theoretical backgrounds, attributable to their different worldviews with their various ontological, epistemological, and axiological aspects.

Considering this view, the epistemological foundation of social sciences explains how Western academic production is neither objective nor universal because it reflects a set of epistemological biases. Academic production departing from any other episteme is no exception and the Islamic paradigm is indeed not an exception either.

Since the early 1980s, the “Islamization of Knowledge” project has focused on contrasting epistemes, because criticizing Western thought in its entirety and its epistemological foundations was a basic step towards the foundation of Islamic social sciences. Mona Abul-Fadl built on these efforts to introduce an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm in political science.

The purpose of this methodological introduction is not merely to acknowledge the contrasting epistemes but to reflect on the possibilities of theorizing from comparative paradigms that have different epistemological backgrounds.

## 2.2 The Impact of Epistemological Differences on Theorizing

The impact of epistemological differences on the theoretical study of political science and IR can be summarized as follows:

- a) Epistemological differences have an impact on the very concept of science, and its sources, methods, and tools. They also have an impact on the concepts of objectivity, neutrality, and the role of values in science and the boundaries of the word “scientific.”
- b) Epistemological differences explain differences between paradigms, or between “analytical models” as designated by Elmessiri. They also explain the rise of new critical post-positivist theoretical approaches that counter the dominant positivist paradigms. Positivists and post-positivists disagree over epistemological points of departure, the dialectic of power and knowledge, and the purpose and role of science.
- c) Comparative or contrasting concepts are key manifestations of the difference between the Western positivist, partial, reductionist, and materialist episteme, on the one hand, and the normative, comprehensive, and ethical episteme (including an Islamic one), on the other.

In a humanistic/naturalistic episteme, the concept of conflict, for example, is based on hegemony, dominance, and submission. This episteme regards power as a core value and a life goal, and conflict as driven by either material interests or utilitarian idealism. However, conflicts are not terminated once these interests are achieved, because conflict is a permanent state and a basic feature of natural and social orders. In a *tawḥīdī* episteme, the concept of conflict is differently constructed. Here, *tadāfu*<sup>c</sup> serves the function of bringing social systems back to just equilibrium and hence guarantees the continuation of life on earth. Positive deterrence is the value, and *tadāfu*<sup>c</sup> is a temporary situation; a means and not an end. *Tadāfu*<sup>c</sup> is a Qur’anic term that refers to all kinds of opposite social interactions that lead to mobility; to adjustments or changes in positions.

This previous analysis provides tools to critically analyze many dichotomies that emerged as an outcome of the dominance of a single episteme: reason/revelation, matter/value, science/religion, constant/variable, part/whole, relative/absolute, man/nature, man/God, objectivity/bias, and universality/particularity. These epistemological dichotomies of contrasting concepts have their ontological and methodological implications on theorizing and science. In fact, putting these dichotomies under scrutiny defies the uniqueness and universality of this positivist methodology and falsifies labeling it as the scientific, objective, and unbiased.

Here, I will sum up the conclusions of my methodological introduction:

- Theorizing can be hierarchically ranked from top to bottom as follows: episteme (pre-method), paradigm (guiding model), theory and research method.
- The (systemic) relationship between the epistemological, ontological and methodological aspects differs from one paradigm to the other. For instance, different definitions of power and its essence influence the patterns of power distribution and how power relations are managed and for what purpose.
- The existence of multiple and diverse civilizational paradigms is traceable to the existence of multiple epistemes.
- The multiplicity of paradigms explains the existence of different theories on the same topic, be they theories from within the same episteme or from different comparative, contrasting, and competitive epistemes.
- Any paradigm can study whatever phenomena by resorting to systematic scientific methods or tools, because being “scientific” is not a monopoly of behavioralism and positivism.

## PART II: THE PARADIGM DEBATES: FROM DOMINANT PARADIGMS TO THE CRISIS OF THE DISCIPLINE

### INTRODUCTION

The theoretical literature, including that of the founding Western schools, attests to the fact that continuous change is the only invariable aspect of international relations and of IR theories. IR history is marked by scholarly disputes across various successive paradigms, with debates developed in parallel with and in response to various dimensions of global change. This connection further demonstrates the significance of the paradigm debates approach. The competing nature of the paradigms, with one or other dominating, and/or the emergence of new paradigms, are all indicators of IR responding to either a state of stability or a state of change and transformation in international and global affairs. This study does not intend to delve deeply into the details of paradigm debates in terms of either content (agents, actors, processes, issues, and the relationship between internal and external aspects) or methods of research. The aim is to map major paradigms; to trace the phases and essence of the evolution of the debates between them; and to describe the state of the debates since the end of the Cold War.

### Chapter Three

## **THE THREE GREAT DEBATES: FROM DOMINANT PARADIGMS TO COMPETING PARADIGMS**

Three major events marked great power interactions in the twentieth century: WWI, WWII, and the end of bipolarity without an armed fight. Three major questions were often raised in this context: Is it a new era? What is its impact on theory? Did theory in any way affect, or at least predict, the big event? In fact, answers to these questions always revolved around great power politics, namely relations between the rival Western centers of power. During the early phases of this

discussion, other non-Western actors (the South, the Third World) were neither mentioned in this discussion nor invited to it, despite claims of universality of the discipline. Afterwards, however, a gradual change has taken place both from within and without the Western academic circles (as will be shown later when discussing the crisis of the discipline).

### **3.1 The First Debate: Idealism Versus Traditional Realism**

This debate occurred during the early days of the discipline after WWI. The momentum of the debate was during the interwar period (when idealism was the dominant paradigm), and it lasted till after the end of WWII (when the realist school prevailed).

### **3.2 The Second Debate: Traditionalism Versus Behavioralism**

“Scientific” behavioralism dominated IR in the 1960s as a response to the scientific movement in the social sciences, which sought to apply the tools and methods of the natural sciences to research and analysis. IR followed suit in transforming international studies into organized scientific research. It tried to benefit from the behavioralist revolution in the social sciences to challenge traditional methods of studying IR and to call for a general theory.

In traditional research methods, theorizing originates from philosophy, history, and law. Behavioralists utilize an inductive approach to research based on an accumulation of knowledge and data through observation and other systematic practices. From data they move onto theory aiming to construct a general theory explaining the facts of international relations and predicting its development. This can be achieved by applying empirical tools of data collection and analysis and using quantitative and comparative methods to test hypotheses on the correlation between variables. The end result should be generalized explanations of frequent patterns of behavior over time and place that avoid becoming involved in redundant narrative details, supposedly leading to the construction of a general theory of IR.

The dominance of behavioralism declined during ensuing periods of the evolution of theorizing. In fact, the second great debate gave rise to subsequent methodological and epistemological debates among rival paradigms.

### 3.3 The Third Debate: Realism Versus Liberalism

The early beginnings of the third debate are usually associated with the post-behavioralist stage of Western theorizing. Post behavioralism emerged as a reaction to critiques levelled at behavioralism.

The third debate thus revolved around four major issues: (a) patterns of power distribution among states and other actors; (b) change in the essence of power with increasing significance of economic aspects; (c) the process of power management (interdependence or conflict and anarchy); and (d) the state of the international order (peace or conflict). Unlike the first and second debates, the third was not a debate between two rival paradigms but was between a dominant perspective and a bundle of complementary schools, initially enjoying relatively little consensus when compared to the consensus that the realist paradigm had enjoyed.

The common denominator among the multiple non-realist schools was that they introduced new assumptions of IR as far as actors, issues, and processes were concerned.

#### *a) Non-state Actors*

They play a significant role in changing the structure and content of international politics, raising new issues, and bringing to the fore the so-called “nation-state crisis.”

#### *b) Scope and Priority of Issues (Substance and Conception of Power)*

Issues of military security are top priority for realists who assume that they are also given top priority at the governmental and international levels. Military power is considered to be the principal tool for defending the state's sovereignty, interests, and territories, as only military security protects the survival of the state and the stability of the international order through balance of power.

At that time, rising new approaches advocated that there was no clear hierarchy of issues, these approaches recorded the alterations in the – relative and absolute – significance of military power and the growing importance of economic and transnational issues; the latter had been gradually exercising a stronger impact on transformations in world politics and gradually had been recognized as having their influence on high politics.



*c) International Interdependence*

This emerged as a new pattern of international processes that reflected new types of actors and issues. It was a manifestation of the increasing interconnectedness between individuals, communities, and governments across different states. It reflected a substantial feature of contemporary international politics; that being the overlap between economic and political dimensions, and the interconnection between internal and external aspects. This unprecedented interconnectedness was a result of tremendous progress made in modern transportation, communication and technological development.

The notion of international interdependence indicated the cross-border effects of economic and political processes in an interconnected system. It was multidimensional as it took place on regional, continental, and global levels. It was also cross-cutting as it covered the political, economic, military sectors and others simultaneously.

Meanwhile, theorizing in IR began to demonstrate a growing comparative interest in the Marxist theory and thought. That was manifest in Western literature on the world order and international political economy, for example. The manifestation that mattered the most was the emergence of the dependency school from the Latin American civilizational region in the mid-1970s, which was seen as the first attempt to break the Western Anglo-Saxon monopoly over international theorizing.

To sum up, from the 1980s onwards, the map of IR paradigms has changed. Since the three consecutive great debates, IR theory has neither witnessed the dominance of a single paradigm, nor ongoing debates between two rival paradigms. In effect, following the three successive great debates, inter-paradigm debates have become the essential feature of IR theory. It is noteworthy that, during that period, many publications in IR theory introduced paradigms and paradigm debates by referring to realism, behavioralism, liberalism and Marxism (or radicalism/globalism) altogether.

## Chapter Four

# THE END OF THE COLD WAR: TOWARDS A CRISIS IN THE DISCIPLINE OF IR

The Cold War period had impacted International Relations strongly following the Second World War, and so its end in the early 90s was to have major implications for the discipline of IR.

During the early 1990s, IR theorists were specifically interested in the characteristics of international relations. The dialectic relationship between internal and external factors was a core concern of earlier international theorizing. By the end of the Cold War, and in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the reciprocated influence between internal and external factors was constantly increasing in an unprecedented way. The complex impact of this reciprocal relationship on the world order, global change, and international theorizing took multiple forms and extended to various fields.

Two questions were raised in this regard: Did the end of the Cold War mark the beginning of a new era, or did it just reveal changes that had already been taking place over the course of two preceding decades? Did globalization stimulate the end of the Cold War, or was globalization an outcome of it?

### 4.1 The Characteristics of Post-Cold War International Relations

Do we live in a new world with completely different challenges? IR scholars approached this question from multiple perspectives in search of answers to the essence of global change. For the purpose of depicting the state of theory at that period, I select a sample of different theoretical writings from the 1990s:

*Robert Adams:* The end of the Cold War is a turning point indeed, yet conflictual features of IR will persist. The great-power relations are moving away from armed conflict to new forms of hegemony based on blocs and regional balances. Meanwhile, there are increasing tensions in the South with no signs of great power willingness to resolve them. International instability is stimulated by North-South unsettled tensions.

*James Rosenau:* The Post-Cold War world is in disorder; it is a world of “post-internationalism.” International chaos is fed by the same factors that ended the Cold War.

*Fred Halliday:* The rules of the game have changed and the end of the Cold War was the culmination of transformations that had been growing since the 1970s. These transformations carry aspects of homogeneity and heterogeneity at the same time.

*Pierre Grosser:* Neither the nature nor the patterns of conducting international relations have changed. The circumstances surrounding international relations since the end of the Cold War have changed, but in fact no substantial change has occurred to international relations itself. In fact, duality and contradictions still dominate international relations: with a newly shaped world seeking unity and ideological, economic, and political homogeneity, and another world characterized by disaggregation, either because of the nature of authority and the diffusion of power, or because of the dissolving bipolar structure, or the emergence of new actors.

*Mohammed Selim:* Global changes have different direct impacts on the Muslim world. Multi-level challenges (resulting from Western policies) generate various challenges that the Muslim world is required to face. There have been many transformations that have radically changed the basic foundations of the world order and resulted in the emergence of a new hierarchy of power in international relations.

A close examination of these writings and others can help us highlight the following observations:

The difficulties faced by great powers that affected their ability to perform as effective global authority, because of the increasing problems of the Third World, were considered to augment the probabilities of global disorder.

Theorizing about reality was confined to the framework of Western capitalist values and interests. Although multiple schools tackled democratization, capitalism, and cultural values, they still expressed a unilateral Western perspective. To them, the non-democratic underdeveloped Third World, or South, jeopardized international peace and security once it failed to embrace democracy or achieve development, i.e. it had become the source of global chaos and disorder. This was a

wild repetition of the traditional image of realist conflictual international politics.

#### 4.2 Globalization: The Concept and Its Impacts from the Perspective of Competing Paradigms

Globalization is a fuzzy term that appeared in a wide range of international studies in the 1990s. My approach to globalization was that of a researcher seeking to diagnose the then prevalent state of research by constructing the concept of globalization, and mapping the aspects, levels, and problems of its study. Two main motivations were driving this approach.

The first motivation was the prevalence of the concern with globalization in almost all disciplines of political science, social sciences, and humanities, and the spread of the concept coupled with other important concepts such as the globalization of capitalism, human rights, business, trade, investment, culture, identity, values, etc. The second motivation was related to the reception of the term in the Arab world. After the term had been coined and circulated in Western academia, responses in Arab and Muslim circles varied between a spectrum of rejection and harsh criticism, on the one hand, and justification and acceptance, on the other, which in fact closely mirrored the early 90s responses to the terms “New World Order” and “international legitimacy.”

##### *a) Problems of Definition: Identification and Explanation*

Comparative analysis of the assumptions of realism, neo-liberalism, and international interdependence on globalization revealed the emergence of novel assumptions that challenged the traditional conception of the levels of analysis in IR and political science.

Jan Aart Scholte argued that the issue of “borders” was central to the debates on globalization, along with other associated issues like governments, economies, identity, and community. He articulated an operational definition of globalization based on the distinction between three border-related indicators: cross-border relations, open-border relations, and trans-border relations.

As for the explanatory factors behind globalization, some definitions of globalization emphasized the international political economy approach, while others applied more comprehensive and generic

approaches that added non-economic factors to analysis (i.e., factors other than the globalization of capitalism or the global economy). Comprehensive definitions still considered economics as an essential driving force, yet insufficient to single-handedly provide a thorough analysis of globalization as a phenomenon, a process, or a state. Growing attention was paid to the social, cultural, and religious aspects in academic studies. One very significant indicator of that was the emergence of the clash of civilizations thesis and the ensuing debate which carried blatant cultural and civilizational aspects.

*b) The Repercussions of Globalization*

This topic is often tackled in literature addressing the crisis of the nation-state and the state of the world order.

*c) The State of the World Order*

Is the world heading towards convergence and homogeneity or towards chaos, multiplicity, divergence, and heterogeneity? Are there some forces that push towards a mixture of convergence and divergence? Discussions and answers to these questions were integral to studies on global distribution of wealth and welfare, the founding values of political regimes (especially democracy), and cultural identity and ethical normative aspects. The term “borderless world” was celebrated by numerous studies due to the neoliberal assumptions about the necessity and inevitability of transformations towards a single-market global economy, with increasing direct investments, where everyone would be enjoying the positive impact of trade liberalization. By contrast, there were other studies that put under scrutiny these assumptions and questioned the validity of both what concerned the global economy and what concerned the local social and political consequences of globalization.

*d) The Crisis of the Nation-state*

This discussion was not entirely new, and globalization theorists were not pioneers in bringing this crisis to debating platforms. Structural integrationists, trans-nationalists, global idealists, and even Marxists, all had had their earlier contributions to the discussion on the crisis of the nation-state, though in different contexts and with different details. Globalization theorists did not provide a unified discourse on the crisis of the nation-state.

The debate on the effects of globalization on international relations could be stratified into at least two main strands. One strand advocated

a process of standardization: one world, global economy, universal culture, etc. The second strand revolved around rejecting Western hegemony over global processes. These views have been common among realists, nationalists, and structuralists, and they are also shared by contemporary strands of Islamic thought, with a special focus on the systemic relationship between the civilizational and cultural aspects.

In conclusion, in light of this overview of the different strands examining the manifestations and impact of globalization, the following observations can be noted: IR theory literature portrays globalization as a multifaceted phenomenon: capitalist-economic, democratic-political, and normative-cultural. It is also portrayed as a sustained and ongoing historical process that has been stimulated by many driving forces, but that has been particularly intensified and deepened since the 1990s.

It can therefore be argued that the West has deliberately transformed globalization since the end of the Cold War into an institutionalized and legalized system for the purpose of monopolizing new elements of global power. The ongoing worldwide interactions and mutual influences taking place within the context of globalization are not merely an outcome of structural factors. They are run by the rules of a single civilizational model, controlled by one leading power: the USA (at least before discussions on the decline of the American power set about).

The growing interest in globalization did not forge new questions and answers. The real novelty was a deeper change in the relationship between internal and external factors. Globalization carried along such great changes in terms of magnitude and scope that the cultural was now included in “the political.”

After Western political, military, and economic hegemony has been accomplished, only cultural hegemony is still missing. Structures of the South that did not resist economic dependence but remained resilient to a Westernized democratization, are fighting a harsh battle against cultural hegemony. They are not only defending their back lines, but they are in fact striving not to retreat completely.

To conclude the previous two-step analysis, the literature on the characteristics of the post-Cold War international relations and on globalization reveals that the relationship between internal and

external factors is becoming increasingly complex due to the increasing vulnerability of the internal to the impact of the external in a manner that impedes the fair distribution of the benefits and advantages of globalization to everyone.

## Chapter Five

### **DEBATES BETWEEN COMPETING PARADIGMS: A DIVIDED DISCIPLINE**

Did the world change after the end of the Cold War? The previous two chapters have demonstrated that theorizing in IR has undergone radical changes and has experienced a state of fluidity that has been especially reflected in a state of “post-isms”; fluidity at both levels of content or substance, and research methods. The debates between competing IR paradigms can be summarized as follows.

#### **5.1 The Chaotic Designation of Paradigms**

In IR the same paradigm often appears under a spectrum of different designations signaling a chaotic approach to the body of thought. For instance, Realism, one of the dominant schools of thought in international relations theory, is also termed as international chaos, state centrism, power struggles, and power politics, all different names given to the same realist paradigm. Similarly, liberalism, international community, international interdependence, and multilateralism are various designations of the liberal paradigm. The same applies to Marxism, sometimes called global structuralism, class conflict or world-system. In fact, these are not synonyms, but chaotic designations. Identifying the main assumptions and hypotheses of a paradigm is dependent on answers to primary questions about actors, themes, processes, outcomes, and philosophical or intellectual roots of the paradigm.

#### **5.2 The Multiplicity of Schools and Strands**

Paradigms are neither static, nor unadaptable wholes, yet, each paradigm preserves a hard core that makes it clearly distinguishable from others. Traditional idealism, for example, included multiple

schools and strands, and so did neo-idealism (in the post-behavioralist phase), which was considered to be an extension of idealism but with special attention given to economic aspects. In the same manner, globalization, as perceived by the liberal paradigm, is a multi-dimensional version of idealism with a focus on cultural aspects. Hence, a boost in IR theoretical literature did not entail academic richness as much as it signified a crisis and failure to formulate a general theory. This is attributable to a narrow-sighted theoretical oscillation between the different aspects of the phenomena.

### 5.3 The Erosion of Boundaries Between Paradigms

The absence of a dominant paradigm in IR and the existence of a multiplicity of schools and strands within each paradigm, meant that in a complex and rapidly changing international context, swift and flexible divisions occurred. This not only revealed the ability of paradigms to adapt to new contexts, on the one hand, but was evidence of areas of intersection between the different paradigms, on the other, falsifying, thereby, the claim that each paradigm held a monopoly with reference to concern over a specific aspect of the international phenomena that no other paradigm shared.

### 5.4 Can Paradigm Debates be Settled?

Can paradigm debates be settled? Can one paradigm be judged as absolutely more valid or correct than other paradigms? As regards these two questions, there is consensus on some points:

- Paradigms are not assessed according to independent or external criteria. Each paradigm or school has its own criteria of assessment that is framed from within the paradigm.
- Despite the fact that the mere existence of paradigm debates suggests that paradigms offer competing explanations of international relations, followers of each paradigm tend to focus on the paradigms' significant issues, while ignoring other paradigms, even seeking to marginalize them, especially those belonging to a different episteme.
- As Rosenau affirmed in 1981, paradigms are different perspectives on realities of international relations. The supremacy of one perspective over others at a point in time is basically attributable to changes in realities, which drive research on the nature and depth of these changes.



### **5.5 The Approach of Successive Competing Paradigms and the Perpetual Movement of Science**

This approach generates the false impression that theory is constantly changing; and that theorists are constantly realizing their mistaken assumptions and simply shifting to adopt a new perspective. It is a completely erroneous impression because the great debates among consecutive paradigms do not entail the replacement of one dominant paradigm by another rising competitive paradigm. Paradigms do not fade away. They continue to exist and sometimes develop their own new strands and schools, such as neo-realism, neoliberalism, and neo-Marxism.

### **5.6 The General Pattern of the Evolution of Paradigm Debates**

I describe this pattern as a permanent pendulum-wise oscillation, entailing a continuous redefinition of the political (i.e., a redefinition of the discipline's boundaries, scope, and substance), taking place at the ontological as well as methodological levels, thus reflecting the reciprocated relationship between content and methodology.

The military aspects of security issues were given priority under the hegemony of the realist paradigm. Later on, issues of international political economy (international interdependence and dependency) came to the fore, and the religious and cultural aspects of IR have gained special attention during the globalization era.

The normative, cultural, civilizational, and religious approaches to IR managed to include new levels of analysis alongside the traditional levels of the state and international system. The ontological oscillation (related to the content and substance of IR), though remaining within the confines of the positivist episteme, was gradually and cumulatively coupled with a methodological oscillation; from the great debate between behavioralism and traditionalism, to post-behavioralism and the call for a renewed interest in values in the 1980s, to post-positivism that has been reflecting on the chances of an epistemological shift in IR since its emergence.

### **5.7 The Impact of Western-Centrism on the Discipline of IR: Claims of Universality in Question**

The successive paradigms of IR were initially all Western, associated –

as suggested by some – with the origin of IR as “the discipline of victorious powers in the two world wars.” This trend grew even further following the end of the Cold War, with the rising prominence of post-positivist and post-modernist revisions of IR. These scattered, albeit cumulative, observations and early alarms were implicitly included in early revisions of IR Theory. Yet, in a later phase, revisionist efforts, driven by various motivations, advocated the importance of paradigmatic plurality and asserted the need for comparative civilizational paradigms.

The preceding seven characteristics defined an academic context that justified and even urged for an Islamic civilizational theoretical contribution to IR. Then, revisionist post-positivist and post-modernist schools provided further justifications and motivations for such a contribution, in addition to those stemming from the Islamic system’s epistemological, theoretical, and methodological particularity, and from its need to address the reality and interests of the Ummah (the community of Muslims tied together by the bonds of Islam) and the world. However, attempts to construct this corresponding comparative civilizational theoretical contribution had already begun in the mid-1980s at Cairo University. At that time it was a fledgling endeavor with the methodological and epistemological revisions of IR not yet powerfully self-revealing (as will be demonstrated in the fourth part of this study).

### **PART III: THE CRISIS OF THE DISCIPLINE AND THE RISE OF CRITICAL APPROACHES: AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL TURN IN WESTERN THEORIZING**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Previous chapters of this book have in part tracked the temporal development of IR: traditionalism, behavioralism, post-behavioralism, and the post-Cold War era. Also outlined has been the paradigmatic development of IR: from the stage of dominant paradigms and the

three great paradigm debates (the debate between realism and idealism, followed by the debate between traditionalism and behavioralism, and then by the debate between realism and liberalism/pluralism, on the one hand, and radicalism/Marxism, on the other) to the stage of competing paradigms.

At the beginning of the third millennium, many researchers began to characterize the debate that was going on as “the fourth debate” in IR. This “Fourth Great Debate” was between advocates of the competitive dominant paradigms (i.e., mainly neo-realism and neo-liberalism) and post-positivist theories of international relations (e.g., post-structuralism, constructivism, feminism, and post-colonialism). The debate does not revolve around ontological dimensions such as main actors, processes, issues, or concepts, but rather the epistemological dimensions of understanding and theorizing; as post-positivists suggest alternative ways to understanding reality, aside from positivism, and direct criticism to the international reality itself. This development has highlighted the impact of epistemological differences on theorizing in a clearer and more direct way than used to be the case during the second great debate between behavioralism and traditionalism, which was concerned with the methodological aspects of the study of IR.

All debates of social sciences are neither conclusive, nor mutually exclusive (as has already been explained). In its attempt to describe the state of the IR discipline since the end of the twentieth century, IR literature developed three distinct positions: (1) treating these debates as myths created by international relations scholars; (2) abandoning the quest for greater theories in favor of moderate theories that can confront contemporary world problems directly and effectively; and (3) portraying theoretical diversity as a healthy phenomenon and calling for the enrichment of theoretical and epistemological diversity in the discipline.

There is a general consensus that the IR discipline is experiencing a crisis as evidenced in the current fragmentation of the discipline, the state of its paradigms, and the logic governing its debates and their various aspects (ontological, methodological, and epistemological). These aspects can be summarized as follows:

- Paradigms are always in flux, responding to an ever changing and complex international reality. This situation led to the chaos of competitive and contrasting paradigms and to urgent questions about the consequences of this permanent state of flux.

- There is a methodological polarization between the advocates of empiricism and behavioralism, on the one hand, and the advocates of normativism, on the other. A compromise or synthesis is urgently required.”
- When approaching complex international phenomenon, the IR discipline is dominated by reductionist and oscillating perspectives that prevent a deep and precise understanding of current and future transformations.
- IR is dominated by the oscillation between powers and interests, or wars, on the one hand, and the priority of interdependence, cooperation, and the homogeneity of interests, on the other hand, giving little attention to the systemic relationship between these two processes.

The current crisis raises a number of questions. What is new about these approaches ontologically, epistemologically, and methodologically in comparison to the traditional/mainstream competitive paradigms in IR? What contribution do they make to lead the discipline out of its crisis? Is there a real transformation due to these new approaches, or is IR still captivated by its Western positivist, secular epistemological model? Where can we place an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm among these approaches, especially in comparison to the dominant/mainstream paradigms?

## Chapter Six

# THE GROUNDS FOR THE CRITICISM OF POSITIVISM AND WESTERN-CENTRISM AND THE MAP OF CRITICAL THEORETICAL APPROACHES

## 6.1 The Grounds for the Criticism of Positivism and Western Centrism

The establishment of the IR discipline by the victorious in WWI was not separate from the remarkable reactions against the horrors of this war. This historical fact reduced the major concern of IR to one question: How can we prevent the outbreak of war and achieve peace? The idealists and traditional realists therefore monopolized the establishment of this discipline. From the idealist perspective, the

international conflicting order could be turned into a more peaceful and just world order, through such effective means as democracy and collective security. The realists, believed that the conflicting nature of world order could not be changed, but the outbreak of war could be avoided through managing power balances and conflict of interests.

The differentiation between these two sets of theories is based on several assumptions, including that what is out there is not a given and does not exist as such, independently from the perspective adopted for perceiving it, and the assumption that theory does not exist in a vacuum nor is it created *ex nihilo*. More importantly, each theoretical perspective that claims to be scientific and universal has political interests behind it. Hence, the strong ties between power, knowledge, and the Western (American) centrism of the discipline are meant to preserve the status quo and serve the interests of those in power positions.

A distinction is thus made between the foundational epistemological grounds of explanatory theories and those of constitutive theories, or between rationalist theories (neorealism and neoliberalism), on the one hand, and reflectivist theories on the other. Since the emergence of the inter-paradigm debate in the 1980s, there has been a proliferation of theories, most of which have opposed the dominance of rationalist approaches, especially on epistemological grounds.

Rationalist positivism sees the world as separate from the theories that try to explain it. The empirical scientific approaches, grounded on positivism, are seen as more capable of understanding the essence of the world as it is. As for reflectivism, it assumes that every observation of international relations is done according to a perspective or theory, whether intentionally or unintentionally; and therefore, what are considered to be facts from a positivist perspective are no more than a product of implicit powerful assumptions about the world.

The differentiation between these two conceptions of theory was introduced in a pioneering study by Steve Smith in the mid-1990s, in which he criticized the debate of paradigms as an approach to the study of international theory, and identified ten other images of “explanatory theories” versus “constitutive theories.” Smith and other scholars argue that explanatory theories are those that are involved in testing hypotheses, in proposing causal explanations, and in identifying main trends and patterns in international relations.

My analysis thus far has implicitly referred to the link between positivism, realism, and American hegemony over the discipline. This relationship has given additional support to scattered theoretical efforts that have warned against the implications of Western centrism for the universality of IR Theory.

## 6.2 The Map of Critical Theoretical Approaches: Assumptions and Hypotheses, and the Rationalist Positivist Counter-Criticism

### *a) Why is There a Need for the Map?*

It is important to start with outlining the map in order to avoid generalizations which undermine the credibility of some theoretical studies that address these theories or approaches, especially in light of a proliferating interest in them. Since the end of the 1980s, Steve Smith distinguished between neo-realism and neoliberalism as explanatory positivist theories, on the one hand, and constitutive theories, on the other. Marxism, post-colonialism, and green theory were also distinguished and classified as explanatory theories, that seek change though.

Viotti distinguishes between the three competitive major paradigms, to which he adds the English School, on the one hand, and what he calls "interpretive understandings," as opposed to explanatory and constructivist understandings, on the other. Muhammad al-Sayyid Selim classifies postmodernism or post-international relations as the third perspective which competes with the perspectives of both international anarchy and international society. He does not classify specific theories or trends under that category, but he formulates a general set of defining features.

The postmodernist perspective, according to Selim, emphasizes, then, that there are no fixed laws, patterns, or generalizations. Social reality is highly ambivalent. The rule in social life is arbitrariness, spontaneity, and relativity. Contrary to old typologies, Selim maintains that among the most important expressions of this perspective are the studies of Lewis Gaddis after the end of the Cold War, Rosenau's writings on governance without government in a turbulent world (1992), along with the emergence of reflexive rationalism.

Muhammad al-Sayyid Selim's reading of "the postmodernist paradigm" highlights samples of the rising critical approaches, especially those that aim to refine positivist rationalism through an engagement with

the human and normative aspects. His reading reflects an interest in a synthesizing view that differs from previously mentioned classifications and identifications, from within Western academic circles, of these emerging “critical” approaches. Hence, it is important to admit that the general state of the discipline has been characterized by the rise of post-positivist critical approaches.

*b) Main Assumptions of Three Interpretive Approaches*

Viotti focused on three strands of interpretive understandings: social constructivism, Critical Theory, and postmodernism. The constructivist criticism of realism and liberalism began in the early 1980s, asserting that knowledge is influenced by subjectivity, and that reality is not out there; hence, it showed interest in values, rules, identities, and their impact on our perception of ourselves and on the ways in which we relate to the world.

In contrast to neorealists and neoliberals who assume that identities and interests are givens, constructivists argue the international structure is not a given, but is influenced by many factors such as science, norms, and law. This structure can influence the identities and interests of agents, as well as international outcomes in various fields such as humanitarian intervention and weapons of mass destruction.

Unlike the materialist approach, constructivism emphasizes the social dimension of structures. The world is regarded as a permanently incomplete project, always becoming, rather than being, as opposed to the much narrower realist view of change.

Critical Theory underlines “emancipatory politics,” that is, social and political transformation through an exploration of the relationship between power and freedom. To achieve this transformation, it is essential to scrutinize the current understanding of international politics, of existing realities of IR and their development over time. The theme of “emancipation” is a common concern of the Frankfurt School, which used a Marxist critique of political economy and turned it into a critique of ideology. Critical Theory maintains that knowledge seeking is inherently political, since theorizing “without a purpose” is an impossibility, even a shame. Theory, as Robert Cox succinctly stated, is always for someone and for some purpose.

Therefore, Critical Theorists are interested in the purposes served by different theories, arguing that beliefs held by positivists necessarily

reflect themselves in biased claims about “truth” and are in fact part of grand global ideological schemes that seek to legitimate particular world orders. One of the tasks of Critical Theorists is to unmask such biases and expose the class or elite whose interests these theories, or more accurately these ideologies, are designed to serve. In other words, Critical Theorists put their cards on the table while being self-reflective.

As for postmodernism, its advocates argue that what we see, what we choose to see or measure, and the mechanisms or methods we employ, are all of human construction, as they essentially rely on perceptions and cognitive processes influenced by prior understandings and meanings. Like Critical Theorists and feminists, postmodernists assume a strong “connection between power and knowledge” in the analysis of international relations. Some postmodernists trace the significance of power-knowledge relations over time (genealogy) and unveil false discourses in the study of international relations.

It can be argued that postmodernists dive beneath the surface. They deconstruct words, phrases, statements, and texts, in search for underlying and implicit meanings in communications and discourses as a means for understanding. They regard us as subjective creatures; we human beings are the source of knowledge about the world around us. Here again, this assumption can be subjected to scrutiny by an Islamic, civilizational critical paradigm, which questions the claim that the sources of knowledge are limited to human beings only.

While the realists and positivists hold critical approaches as partly responsible for the crisis of the international relations discipline, a crisis manifest particularly in the absence of a dominant paradigm and fierce theoretical competition, the advocates of these critical approaches regard them as a means for treating “the crisis of the discipline” and its main symptoms: reductionism, decontextualization, and the epistemological, ontological, and methodological oscillation which characterized the course of the development of international relations theory over decades, and marked the crisis of the discipline at the beginning of the third millennium. Just as there were reconciliatory views, at the ontological as well as methodological levels, during the heyday of the traditionalist-realist debate and the realist-pluralist debate, reconciliatory views are present during this fourth debate as well.



## THE DEFINING FEATURES OF CRITICAL THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Critical theoretical approaches in IR are growing in number and embody a wide range of interests. These include rising interest in values and their relationship to reality; an increasing interest in civilizational, cultural, and religious dimensions, as well as the essence of the relationship between these and between real politics, on the one hand, and theoretical levels of analysis, on the other.

A renewed interest in values in the political study is gaining grounds. In the context of successive societal and global developments, political sciences and social sciences in general face methodological and theoretical challenges that necessitate significant revisits of the state of the discipline in all fields. It is also true, however, that politics is being redefined. The essence, framework and circles of political phenomena are experiencing radical transformations in their philosophy, forms, and levels. These transformations redefine “the political” and consequently the scope and boundary of political science. The material components of the concept have changed, or their meanings are being reconceived and re-conceptualized.

Here, I will explore the findings of the proceedings of the academic seminar of the Department of Political Science at Cairo University over the course of two consecutive years:

- All the major fields of political science witness a revision of the scope and boundaries of the discipline and its methodology. This state is characterized by a critique of behavioralism accompanied by a renewed interest in values, and an engagement with cultural dimensions along with the traditional political, economic, and military ones.
- The relationship between political science, social sciences, and humanities has been reinforced, and obtained multiple significance, in terms of research issues, actors, and processes.
- The plurality of competitive paradigms in each field and the absence of a dominant paradigm represent the most important manifestations of the crisis experienced by political science and social theory.
- The theoretical frameworks for studying applied topics are not

ready-made. Their preparation requires comparative readings of the theories related to the topic of research and its different aspects so that the researcher can determine the theoretical framework that best suits their research topic and problem.

- The importance of theoretical frameworks becomes clearer considering the extent to which decision-making and policymaking centers benefit from the results of theoretical and scientific research.
- The issue of particularity and universality was manifest in a wide range of forms and levels, raising a number of questions.
- Discussions revealed the diversity of the intellectual backgrounds of the faculty members who presented lectures during the seminar sessions, as well as the diversity of the intellectual backgrounds of those who contributed to discussions and commented on the lectures.

The general trends of discussions held over two successive years in the academic seminars thus revolved around sets of binaries: the intersection between fields/the boundaries of the field, thought/action, crisis/revision and renewal, science/values, particularity/universality, and the plurality of paradigms/the dominance of a paradigm. A horizontal review of the state of the discipline over more than two decades has revealed these accumulating features of the fourth great debate. A vertical review revealed that these rising critical theoretical approaches still have not achieved a sufficient epistemological breakthrough in the discipline that justifies describing their impact on the discipline as a paradigm shift.

Second, these interests, characteristic of the fourth great debate, have not grown suddenly, and have not become dominant interests in the field yet.

Third, these five different fields of interest that have drawn the attention of the rising critical theoretical trends have also attracted the attention of the competing dominant paradigms in one way or another, who showed interest in them, yet, without giving up on their own basic epistemological and ontological hypotheses and assumptions.

Fourth, these five fields of interest represent/form a system, because they overlap, intersect, and cumulate at the levels of essence and impact. The present study does not claim to be dealing with the debate revolving around these fields of interests between the mainstream/dominant paradigms and the critical theoretical approaches in detail.

Rather, the study limits itself to reflecting on the most relevant problems raised in the course of the debate and reasons behind the growing interest in these fields.

### 7.1 Renewed and Rising Interest in Values

The late 1980s and the early 1990s saw many calls, driven by various reasons, for paying attention to values and normative dimensions. John Gaddis's study on the impact of the end of the Cold War on international relations theory marked the beginning of a stage of methodological and epistemological revisions. Gaddis contends that the different behavioralist, structuralist, and evolutionary approaches/paradigms failed to forecast the end of the Cold War or the transformation of world order and argued that the soft sciences were becoming harder just as the hard sciences were becoming softer.

Since the end of the Cold War, the rise of interest in ethics and values has been accompanied not only by a debate on appropriate research methods, but also with epistemological revision questioning the more general positivist view of the world. Though departing from a criticism of positivism, the degrees and approaches of the growing interest in values have varied since the beginning of the third millennium.

Christian Reus-Smit and Duncan Snidal called for reuniting values and social sciences as a way to serve action and to assist the mission of science in guiding change. This call persistently reminds us of the reasons behind the dominance of the explanatory theories that displaced organized and conscious normative thinking. Reus-Smit and Snidal declared their structural and rational biases, but refused to confine themselves to any particular classification, and they searched for a common ground that united them despite their differences.

They argued that current international changes had made the contemporary moment suitable for reuniting the scientific and normative. Also that if the IR discipline has been always accused of its limited effect on public politics, this is not due to its focus on theory, though this is the favorite justification adopted by many scholars, but because it lost its identity as a practice-oriented discipline that brings together values and social science. There is a need for the field to reclaim this identity.

## 7.2 The Rise of Interest in Religious, Cultural, and Civilizational Dimensions

The rise of the role of religion, culture, and civilization in the study of IR Theory represents one of the most important fields of interest of post-Cold-War and post-positivist revisions. The rise of interest in these dimensions, was fueled by the powers of globalization and the powers of divisions, conflicts, and the religious, ethnic, and national bloody wars that broke out throughout the world after the end of the Cold War. That interest became also evident in literature explaining the end of the Cold War. That literature was not confined to military and economic dimensions, but also embraced cultural explanations.

The main paradigms adopted different perspectives on the relationship between the cultural dimension and other dimensions (i.e., whether they considered the cultural dimension to be an independent or a dependent variable) in international relations. Since the theory of culture has not provided simple and easy answers regarding the essence of culture and its relationship to religion and civilization, the interest in the cultural dimension in political science is reflected in the form of a diversity of schools and approaches.

Methodological problematics arose because of the renewed interest in the cultural dimension. How can we study it in a methodologically scientific way despite its normative character? The introduction of this dimension into the study of international relations is deeply related to the redefinition of “the political”: at the levels of the concept of power, actors, and issues. Opening up to the cultural dimension necessarily entails rethinking international politics at the levels of the individual and society.

One of the most important areas for studying the impact of the rise of cultural dimensions is the one related to peoples, nations, groups, and individuals. Harold Saunders presents a concept of “politics” as relations, whose study requires a paradigm based on a multilevel process of continuous interaction, that is a “relational paradigm” that has “relationship” at its core. The concept of relationship does not focus on the components of the relationship (the actors); rather, it focuses on the multilevel process of continuous interaction in political, social, and economic life.

Petito and Michalis, present a view that is more holistic and systemic, and more critical of the theoretical Western centrism (realist positivism), which lacks interest in the issues, problems, and challenges that the concept of civilizational dialogue imposes on the future of the world and international relations. Dialogical initiatives have become a sort of a global social movement that reflects human diversity and seeks human solidarity, not uniformity or global hegemony. They are the peaceful tool of managing the future of multicultural and globalized global society.

Some debates about the weight of religion, culture, and civilization, and hence of ideas, values, and history in the study of international relations reveal how theories differ in their answers to these questions, *inter alia*, because they differ in how they address changes in reality. Moreover, some of these debates direct their attention to the theoretical challenge that religion poses to IR Theory. What is special about this pattern of renewed interest in religion in international relations is its harsh criticism of the traditional realist model's exiling of religion and approach to addressing a renewed interest in religion since the emergence of the "clash of civilizations" thesis and other similar theses, that all too often associate the resurgence of religion with new Cold War mindsets, the danger of fundamentalist politics, even the threat of global terrorism.

The manifest, growing interest in the religious, cultural, and civilizational dimensions, as drivers or subjects of study or processes in international relations, must raise the question about the contribution to this debate from a comparative, Islamic, civilizational paradigm. In this regard, Alsayed Abd al-Muttalib Ghanim wonders about the purpose of the diverse and sophisticated political theorizing, which is preoccupied with the relationship between the cultural and political through different stages.

Ghanim's thought-stimulating questions led his audience to reflect on another crucial question: Does the current engagement with the cultural dimension in international relations serve the interests of great powers in the international system only, or is it one of the resistance mechanisms embedded in the structure of world order and its levels as well?

These complex questions call for investigation into the three remaining fields of interest of the fourth great debate. These are: the interest in

the contribution of non-Western civilizational paradigms to IR Theory in resistance to the Western centrism of the IR discipline, inter-disciplinarity and global change. In what follows, I explore the third field of interest of the great fourth debate.

### **7.3 The Western-Centrism of the International Relations Discipline: The Criticism of Claims of Universality**

Questions have been raised concerning the ability of non-Western contributions to fill a gap in IR Theory, a gap partly revealed by academic discourse on “the crisis of the discipline.” The Project of International Relations in Islam (1986-1996) pioneered reflection on the purpose and need for such a contribution. Many aspects of divergence between these “Western” critical attempts and the attempt of the Egyptian school of political science at constructing an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm of International Relations are identifiable and will be highlighted in some detail in the fourth part of this study. It suffices here to refer to one of the most popular and holistic criticisms which appears in the introduction of an edited book that established the need for non-Western contributions in IR upon a set of epistemological motives and justifications, which lie at the heart of the “critical perspective.”

The theoretical framework suggested by the book for studying contributions from Asian civilizational circles, consists of four elements: (1) traditions of political thought and the political thought of the military, political, and religious classical figures or symbols; (2) the intellectual approaches of contemporary Asian leaders and their foreign policy to the organization of the international order; (3) the application of some Western theories to local contexts and dilemmas to assess the former’s relevance; and (4) the study of particular events and experiences and the development of concepts that can be used as tools of analysis of international relations, in a way that allows for locating Asia within the world order and comparing it with other parts of the world.

The book’s introduction shows, the selection of Asia in particular is related to the new international power balance manifest in the rise of Asia, the discourse on “Asian Values,” and the labelling of the 21st century as “the Century of China.” Ironically, choosing Asia (China, Japan, India, Indonesia, Korea, etc.) in effect reflects the same traditional geo-graphical materialist logic related to power balances,

influence, and nation-states, rather than any particular interest in normative aspects that are related to people's lives.

Does the “Islamic Civilizational Paradigm” have a contribution to make in this regard? Is an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm just creating a new dichotomous depiction of reality? It is remarkable that the edited book does not refer to Islam as one of its case studies, but it does not ignore Islam completely.

#### **7.4 Interdisciplinarity: The Engagement with Thought and History in International Theorizing as an Example**

One of the most important features of the crisis of the IR discipline, according to behavioralists and positivists, is the fluctuation of the demarcating boundaries between it and other social sciences, thus threatening the essence of this “independent” discipline, its scope, boundaries, and methodology. The epistemological, onto-logical, and methodological revisions necessitated a broadening of the scope of the discipline and a reconsideration of the concept of the political.

These interdisciplinary relations take many names. One important study identified four types of interdisciplinary studies. First, informed disciplinarity that is concerned with knowing and reading about another field of knowledge. Second, synthetic interdisciplinarity that focuses on the research problems and concerns that are common among different fields of knowledge. Third, transdisciplinarity that underlines the interconnection, unity, clarity, and consistency across different fields of knowledge for the purpose of solving the problems common among science, technology, and society. Fourth, conceptual interdisciplinarity that explores new intellectual fields and spaces without methodological or academic restrictions.

In the field of thought and history, international interdisciplinary studies are an epistemological and ontological necessity for non-Western efforts and contributions to international theorizing because Western theorizing depends on Western philosophical roots and Western historical practices. Moreover, some of the scholars interested in interdisciplinary studies admit that their studies are confined to Western thought in its different ages and do not extend to cover the thought of other civilizations.

It is remarkable that the Project of International Relations in Islam

already as early as the mid-1980s proved that Western international theorizing ignored the Islamic experience at the levels of thought and history. This conclusion motivated an engagement with these two fields in the foundational works of this project (1986-1996).

### **7.5 Global Change: The Relationship Between Power and Knowledge and the Growing Significance of Normative Dimensions**

There are major temporal and thematic benchmarks that indicate successive changes and transformations, because of which the “global system” moves from one stage to the other. In our Islamic Arab civilizational space, we are located at the heart of these transformations, with their ups and downs, as subjects as well as objects.

The development of the intellectual, theoretical, and epistemological debate about each of these dichotomies and their multiple interrelations is related to developments in the reality of international relations and the state and characteristics of world order. This fact is quite manifest in the content and issues addressed by the paradigm debates.

For example, since the end of the Cold War and the fall of bipolarity, the paradigm debate has experienced three waves that have been correlated with main international benchmarks. The first wave lasted from the end of the Cold War until September 11, 2001. The second wave lasted until the outbreak of the Arab Spring uprisings, late 2010. We are still experiencing the third wave. While the last three decades have witnessed theoretical anticipations for the future of the international system in terms of structure, the nature of power, and power balances and processes, our Islamic Arab civilizational circle has not been absent from these predictions.

Western critical theoretical efforts serve the purpose of guiding and changing, not merely of observing and explaining, because change – according to them – is affected not only through the reformation of the international system’s institutions, but also through treating the root causes of problems, rather than their manifestations or symptoms. The 2008 crisis of the global capitalist system unleashed events and ideas about “global change.” These represented political, economic, and even cultural contexts for the debates on democracy and global justice, between Western paradigms and a change seeking Islamic Civilizational Paradigm, though still under construction. Moreover, Arab Spring revolutions and uprisings have provided a vibrant field for testing the concepts and practices of global democracy.



A series of regional wars during the first decade of the 21st century in Afghanistan and Iraq, under the pretext of the war on terror, came as an activation of the American strategy of the 21st century. These wars exhausted the global American power, politically, economically, and militarily. With the global financial and economic crisis of 2008, the question was asked whether it was a transformation, or merely another of many recurring crises.

The questions throughout the main stages of transition of the 20th century basically revolved around the position of the leading power of the international system, be it European, American, or Asian (Japanese or Chinese); an international system characterized by a global capitalist order that adjusted itself to its frequent crises and came out victorious each time. With the end of the first decade of the third millennium, it became clear that the world was undergoing a double crisis: the crisis of global capitalism and liberalism and that of world leadership. There was also a third crisis, the crisis of the system of values in the world.

The three crises indicate the degree of complexity which the study of change/transformation in international system has reached and that the academic debate has turned to the “transformation” of world order, not merely the “change” of some of its components. Before the outbreak of the global financial crisis of 2008 these debates were frequently associated with the then rising paradigm of globalism, a paradigm that had leaped forward to challenge the realist paradigm. The difference between the two rounds of debates clearly reveals the difference between the discourse of change and the discourse of transformation. The first approach explained the global American strategy (under the neo-conservatists) as an expression of the imperialist stage of the development of American politics. The second warned against the political, economic, and even ethical implications of the huge American military involvement abroad because, rather than signaling the imperialist behavior of the U.S., it could serve as a cause for the decline and the fading of the American global power.

It is, however, almost agreed upon (since 2008), especially in the literature of the critical schools of IR, that we do not focus on the causes of the rise or fall of great empires throughout history in order to give advice to the United States or teach it a lesson, as Paul Kennedy did, though at a time when the United States was at the apex of its victory over the Soviet Union. Instead, we argue that the United States has indeed entered a stage of crisis and that its global power has already started retreating.

These interrelated crises have given rise to a generation of literature on the study of the historical development of international systems that has produced the argument that the current crisis of the world order is also a normative crisis, not merely a crisis of material power.

The interest of the critical theoretical approaches in these five different fields discussed throughout the previous sections reflects mainly their postmodern and secular nature. Hence, the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm can still provide a critical contribution of a different nature, as a paradigm with Islamic foundations and intellectual and historical roots relevant to the experience of the Muslim Ummah. As a non-secular and non-Western paradigm, it raises many questions about values from an Islamic perspective, about religion, cultural and civilizational dimensions, and about the levels of analysis and the engagement with history and thought when studying international relations.

## PART IV: A COMPARATIVE ISLAMIC CIVILIZATIONAL PARADIGM OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: THE MAP OF PROBLEMS AND CHARACTERISTICS

### INTRODUCTION

A comparison between “the Western,” on the one hand, and “the Islamic” and the “non-Western,” on the other is expected to raise two major questions: Does an Islamic Paradigm – as a new critical paradigm that differs, though, from Western critical approaches – represent a quest for “a real universality” that acknowledges epistemological and theoretical plurality and diversity, or rather a quest for a new world and a different reality? What are the characteristics of this paradigm in comparison with Western paradigms, be they positivist or critical?

*First*, the assiduous attempt to construct an Islamic Paradigm of International Relations is part of the response of the Egyptian and Arab political science community to the problem of particularity vs. universality in political science in general.

*Second*, the attempt at constructing an Islamic Paradigm of IR is not a reaction to the critical wave that has been rising since the end of the Cold War, rather, a constructive response with both epistemological and practical motives and objectives.

*Third*, this growing and developing attempt has not been separate or isolated from both the dominant and critical “Western” approaches in the field of international relations but has always sought to engage with them: reflectively and critically as well as comparatively; and therefore, deeply understanding the criticism of critical approaches to the Western IR is as significant to the Islamic Paradigm as its own criticism to the Western IR.

*Fourth*, the school of the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm believes in the importance of subjective theoretical and epistemological dimensions in the production of useful science and that useful science must reflect ontological and epistemological subjectivity and serve the goal of guiding action towards desired change.

*Fifth*, the Project of International Relations in Islam started in 1986 departed from explicit epistemological biases that undermine the claims of objectivity and universal scientific neutrality of dominant IR theories. Writing now from within the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm is indeed totally different from writing “about” it in 1996, when the Project’s publications first appeared.

This whole process of academic production by the Egyptian School has not received a wide degree of visibility within Western and international academic circles equivalent to that received by corresponding critical schools. That is partly due to the fact that the School basically addressed Arab and Egyptian academics, and called for criticizing the dominant Western paradigms in the discipline, which were also subjected to deep revisions and criticism from within their own Western circles. Critical revisions are supposed to provide the necessary grounds for constructing a new paradigm, whether departing from an Islamic frame of reference or any other alternative to it.

A process of criticism, which explores the Western theoretical product and maps its trajectory, has interacted with an authentic building process through three consecutive stages over three decades, during which the efforts of foundation, construction, activation, and application have cumulated.

The first stage was marked by the search for the bases of legitimacy for the proposed paradigm within the discipline, seeking to legitimate it as a paradigm of social sciences. The motives behind and justifications for the project at the time of its inception in 1986 expanded and developed throughout the second stage of its construction that lasted from the mid-90s till the beginnings of the third millennium, especially after the events of September 11, 2001. The credibility of the project was further asserted during a third stage (during the two first decades of the third millennium) when emerging Western critical approaches began also to increasingly call for emancipation from the crisis-ridden impact of the hegemony of positivism over the discipline.

The current stage of the crisis of the divided discipline, whose ontological and methodological dimensions are in permanent oscillation, proves the credibility of the non-positivist Islamic normative paradigm. While different features of “international relations in Islam” had attracted the attention of Western theoretical literature before the end of the second millennium, the last two decades have witnessed the onset of a new stage of interest in an Islamic paradigm, both in terms of theory and practice. Although this interest in a comparative Islamic perspective has become an accepted norm within Western academic circles, some Egyptian and Arab academic circles still question the “scientific” credibility of an “Islamic” paradigm.

Therefore, the answer to the questions raised above lies in tackling the following issues: the nature of the paradigm, its epistemological characteristics and sources (how?); the relationship between the constant and the variable, or between values and reality; and the map of the different aspects of comparison with Western paradigms (what?); the motives for building the paradigm and its objectives (why?); the relationship between theory and reality, between power and knowledge; and finally, the position of the paradigm in the discipline (potentials and criticisms).

## Chapter Eight

### **THE CHARACTERISTICS AND SOURCES OF AN ISLAMIC CIVILIZATIONAL PARADIGM**

The nature and characteristics of an Islamic Paradigm can be summed

up in the following complex statement: an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm of IR is a normative paradigm, however of a special nature. The particularity of this paradigm is traceable to the uniqueness of its sources and origins compared to those of Western paradigms. It is also attributable to the differences between epistemes. This is basically what differentiates an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm from the Western secular paradigms, whether they are materialist or normative and critical. These differences raise two methodological problems: (1) the relationship between the constant and the variable sources of the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm; and (2) the relationship between values and reality from an Islamic perspective.

### **8.1 The Relationship Between the Constant and the Variable Sources of the Paradigm**

The foundational sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah, are the two revealed sources and the only constant sources of Islamic Shari'ah. The sources of the Islamic Paradigm fall into three categories. The first category includes sources dealing directly with the foundational sources. Here, the different jurisprudential standings on the origin of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims as well as the relationship among Muslims themselves are addressed, the differences between jurisprudential schools and their underlying causes are explained, and the different characteristics of these schools, which some Orientalist studies identify as the "traditional theory of international relations in Islam," are depicted.

The second category of sources deals with history and underlines real experiences throughout successive Islamic ages. It aims to understand how these experiences and the position of Muslims in the world have developed from the stage of conquests, unity, and civilization building, to that of regression and defense, and then to that of civilizational backwardness and colonization.

The third category of sources relates to Islamic thought and raises the methodological problem of the relationship between the Islamic thought's three central issue areas: unity, independence, and reform as tackled by the iconic figures and eminent thinkers of the Muslim Ummah throughout successive Islamic ages.

We cannot separate the foundational sources (the sources of the worldview and episteme, i.e., the Qur'an and Sunnah) from history

(practical experience), and thought (systems of values, priorities of interest, and responses to international changes). However, the distinction between the three categories, as sources for founding and constructing a contemporary Islamic perspective on international relations, is a methodological necessity to facilitate analysis. Dealing with these sources should not involve direct literal citation, rather contemplation, understanding, comparison, and critical reading in order to come up with innovative interpretations of contemporary applicability that are not only based on jurisprudential rulings, but also on the deep understanding of political thought, history as well as the rapidly changing contemporary reality.

To address these different sets of sources of an Islamic paradigm of international relations, the Project of International Relations in Islam followed three methodological tracks. The first track acknowledged that the construction of an Islamic Paradigm of International Relations must begin from the foundational sources of Shari'ah, which supply both definitive rulings (not open to different interpretations) and systems of general rules, principles, and fundamentals guiding the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as relations among Muslims themselves.

A second methodological track involved exploring the normative foundations of the paradigm. Therefore, a second main study of the Project of International Relations in Islam is preoccupied with the introduction of values as a frame of reference for studying international relations in Islam. The study sets some key foundations of an Islamic Paradigm by criticizing the concept of values in Western as well as Islamic theoretical studies, highlighting the importance of reinstating values in the face of rationalism and claims of scientific objectivity in social sciences, as well as the need for reflecting on the foundations of the concept and the theoretical potentials of the system of Islamic values.

A third methodological track, addressed by the Project of International Relations in Islam, involved reflecting on the methodological experience of dealing with the foundational sources as well as different sources from Islamic heritage. Therefore, the Project of International Relations in Islam includes two other methodological studies; the third part and seventh part of the Project. The third part offers a precise recording of the real experience of the research team with dealing with the books of jurisprudence, the life of Prophet Muhammad, and exegesis; an

experience driven by the general purpose of studying international relations in Islamic foundational sources and exploring the major jurisprudential standings on specific issues and topics such as war, peace, and the state.

*Foundational Sources and the Problem of the Constant and the Variable*

Of prime importance here is the identification of the relationship between the different strands of jurisprudential schools on war and peace and the general principles and bases guiding the relations between Muslims and other nations. In addition to the importance of recognizing the multiplicity of schools, intellectual standings, and the jurisprudential differences among them, one must realize the justifications for this multiplicity, as well as its underlying causes.

It is also important here to identify the difference between the Islamic and Orientalist perspectives as it relates to the different strands of jurisprudential schools. The Orientalist interpretations of this gap (i.e., of this change in the jurisprudential theorizing about war and peace) deserve some critical reconsideration, with particular reference to four main scholars: Bernard Lewis, Majid Khadduri, Thomas Arnold, and Marcel Boisard. These four scholars relate the development of political jurisprudence on political power (caliphate, imamate, sultanate, and emirate) to the development of political jurisprudence on war and peace, jihad, or *daʿwah*. An Islamic interpretation of this gap identifying the foundations of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims highlights the more constant aspects of this relationship, the principles and bases governing the relationship with the other and the Islamic system of values underlying all Islamic jurisprudential multiplicity and disagreements.

The problem of the constant and the variable in the foundational sources of the paradigm has important methodological implications for the study of international relations from an Islamic perspective, as well as important implications for the paradigm itself. That is because the study of the religious framework requires special methodological tools, including the consulting of commentaries on hadiths and Qurʾanic exegesis. In contrast, the sources of Western dominant paradigms, be they realist or pluralist or structuralist, as well as their intellectual and philosophical roots, are variable human sources derived from the experiences of Western political thought.

*Constructional Sources of Theorizing: Islamic Thought as a Source of Intellectual and Philosophical Foundations*

Islamic thought of international relations serves as a source of theorizing as it helps researchers discover more about the international dimension of Islamic projects of renaissance and grasp the essence of concepts such as jihad, the Ummah, state, war, peace, etc., as understood over centuries by Muslim thinkers. This requires addressing the way in which the international dimension emerged in Islamic thought, and how this dimension is recognized and treated. It is a holistic and systemic problem that relates to the development of the international system as a whole.

Another problem relates to the system of relations between three major issue areas of the paradigm: the internal model, relations among Muslims, and relations with non-Muslims. This three-dimensional relationship should be of interest because it enables us to move from the traditional narrow field of Islamic political thought (focusing on the internal system of authority and the relationship between the ruler and the ruled) to the broader field of Islamic political thought that involves reflections on the international dimension, whether as an extension of the internal or in interaction with it.

When comparing Islamic political thought as a source of international theorizing to Western political thought as a source of international theorizing (as in the domain of international political theory or elsewhere), two facts are worth noting: First, the interest in Islamic political thought performs two functions in the process of international theorizing that are not performed by Western political thought. The first function is to remedy Western paradigms' neglect of Islamic thought, and the second function is to contribute to the construction of the Islamic paradigm of international relations that transcends traditional Islamic studies about "international relations in Islam." Second, approaching Islamic political thought involves a twofold process: approaching thought as a source of theorizing, and approaching thought as a reflection of the development of the state of the Ummah.

International Islamic thought aims to achieve a set of key goals: to provide an understanding of the general frames that surrounded the production of Islamic jurisprudence, and, hence, to contribute to making sense of the development of jurisprudence as a product of the interaction between the original text and reality. Thus, this field reflects



the manner of the interaction between the constant and variable, and between the material and the normative. Despite their different approaches, Muslim thinkers present the results of their testing of the values and rulings of Islam in real life. Therefore, the study of Islamic thought, its development, and diverse models, provides the “civilizational thought” that helps us explore, beyond legal jurisprudence, the relations between Muslims and the world, the relations among Muslims themselves, and the Muslim ways of life.

Because of its development, which serves as a reflection of the state of the Ummah, Islamic thought has been particularly significant for understanding the problems of the current conditions of the Ummah and the world.

*Supporting Sources: History as an Intermediate Link between Jurisprudence (the Foundational) and Thought (the Constructional)*

Western paradigms confine themselves to the experience and history of the European system, especially since Westphalia. The Ottoman Empire is dealt with, not as an Islamic caliphate that has distinctive motives and goals, but as one of the numerous powers that were parties to the traditional system of multipolarity that had prevailed until the Second World War.

Western historical models have provided us with various circular and, increasing as well as decreasing, linear evolutionary models of history that are derived from Western civilizational perspectives on the essence, nature, and interpretation of history. Western historical experience in the discipline of international relations has usually emphasized incidents related to war and peace, changes in the global balances of power, and the position of leading Western powers, especially the outbreak of war has attracted great attention. When addressing the Western historical experience, special emphasis is given to a set of structural and material variables, these include political, military, economic, and social variables.

In contrast, non-material, basically normative, variables have not been given attention by the static holistic models or the evolutionary holistic models which employ history in the study of the development of the international system. Since the 1990s, a growing number of studies has focused on the normative dimensions of studying change in the contemporary global system and has sought to develop a normatively oriented theory to understand this system.

The Islamic Civilizational Paradigm's employment of history has a basic central objective, entailing several complementary objectives that can be achieved indirectly. The central objective is to determine the position of the Islamic state within the structure of the distribution of world powers throughout the successive historical stages of the development of the international system. This is done in a way that explains the rise and fall of the successive Islamic caliphates, the rules that govern this process and the different factors behind it, and the different kinds of relations with non-Muslim powers.

These objectives, therefore, evoke the need for adopting a systemic approach to history, as a part of the systemic studies of international relations. This should include literature that seeks to derive general conclusions on holistic issues, such as the relationship between the "Islamic theory" and international Islamic practices, especially in relation to two main issues: the development towards international Islamic political plurality, and the development towards peaceful relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. This central objective responds to the calls of some Arab historians for historical studies to adopt a new methodology. This new methodology should focus, as Emad Eddin Khalil argues, on generalities and conjunctures and should transcend the details and particularities.

An Islamic Civilizational Paradigm can be a value added, especially in light of the normative nature/character of this Paradigm. The study of the developments of each system of international interactions, or of the transformation or shift from one system to another, should be guided by the following three questions: What is the role of Islamic beliefs and rules? What is the impact of political, economic, and other conditions? What is the impact of non-Muslim cultural considerations or non-Muslim material factors? The answers to these questions help us explain the major shifts in Islamic history away from the Islamic original ideal.

The worlds, which materialists have perceived from a one-dimensional perspective, follow in fact the eternal laws of Allah, those embedded in the universe, life, and people. Muslim's distraction away from the original ideal does not prove the failure of that ideal. Rather, it proves that when Muslims do not follow the teachings of Islam, this is reflected on their practices and the eternal laws become applicable to them, regardless of time or space.

It is crucial in this context is to distinguish between three approaches to the study of history: (1) an approach in which conflict over power and national interest is the driving force (whether military or economic power and whether conflict is managed by war or economic tools); (2) an approach in which class struggle is the driving force; and (3) a third approach in which *daʿwah* (i.e., enlighten-ment about Islam and Islamic values through various non-coercive, tactful, and polite means), which is managed by the tools of war or peace, is the driving force, serving the goal of civilizational *tadafuʿ* (opposite forces checking one another in a way that sustains life on earth).

Thus, the identification of the factors of strength and weakness, or rise and fall, in the first two approaches remain captive of material variables or the factors of material power in principle, while the weight given to immaterial factors, alongside the material ones, increases tremendously in the third approach.

## 8.2 The Problems of the Relationship Between Values and Reality from an Islamic Perspective

The Islamic Civilizational Paradigm, albeit normative because of its sources and nature, provides a perspective on the surrounding world based on the paradigm's legal foundation, system of values, and its set of guiding principles. However, this perspective is not confined to reflecting on what ought to be; rather, it is also closely related to reality and engages with it.

Wadoudah Badran argues that due to theoretical differences between “Western” researchers who advocate the importance of the role of values in international relations, no agreement on a common definition of ethical guidelines for international behavior could be identified. Western scholars interested in values raise the question of the relationship between individual ethics and international collective ethics. Islam, however, provides separate guidelines for each of these levels. Indeed, the study of international relations in Islam reveals that there is no need for analogy, because each of the two levels has its own organizing rules and guiding principles.

Western scholars recognize the importance of values in foreign policy, but they assert that there are no abstract and universal principles that govern them, except in some exceptional cases. Research into international relations in Islam reveals a very different conclusion. Islam

looks at universality in a way that runs counter to that of the West. The religiously forbidden (*ḥarām*) transcends time and place and derives its boundaries and limits from heavenly revelation, while taking permanently changing conditions into consideration.

The study of international relations in Islam adopts a different logic about the relationship between ethics and reality, because the starting point is the Islamic teachings against which we can judge reality. In the Project of International Relations in Islam, the system of values from an Islamic Paradigm, compared to its Western counterpart, is a frame of reference, a methodological approach, and the ideal against which reality is measured when explained, evaluated, or changed. It is an integrated and interwoven seven element system that includes – among other elements – *ṣunan* (divine eternal laws), *maqāṣid* (the higher objectives of Shari‘ah), the Ummah, and civilization.

We cannot say that the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm of International Relations is a mere idealistic or utopian paradigm, because it is occupied with how these relations should be, while this “utopian idealism” was not applied, as some claim, except in the first forty years of the age of the caliphate. The deep understanding of reality is not less important than the deep understanding of the Islamic legal foundations and the normative civilizational foundation, according to the Paradigm's assumptions.

Some scholars seek to explain the foundations of the understanding of “reality” in Islamic political heritage and its different approaches, be they jurisprudence (al-Mawardī and al-Juwaynī), philosophy (al-Farābī), or historical sociology (Ibn Khaldūn). What is relevant about the study of the political field from an Islamic perspective is not the understanding of the “changing reality,” as Medhat Maher argues, but the methodology of studying this reality, its transformation or repetition, and its complexity. The “research approach” controls this process, be it a jurisprudential, philosophical, or historical approach.

This depiction of the Islamic Paradigm as a “normative paradigm of a special nature” represents a rebuttal to some of the aspects of criticism and rejection that the Islamic Paradigm has been exposed to. Such criticism and rejection derive from a perspective that confines religion to places of worship and refuses to recognize any relationship between reason and revelation.

This perspective fails to grasp the essence of Islam as a belief, religion, way of life, and system of values, eternal laws, and rulings. In fact, this perspective remains confined to a narrow meaning of empirical methodology, which corresponds to a narrow definition of what is scientific, and does not open up to the current revision of the definition of science, already identifiable within Western academic circles themselves. These revisions, from within Western academic circles, have often questioned the separation between the scientific methodology and values in a way that have renewed the prospects of the Western normative theory.

Despite the existence of an intermediate zone of intersection between these Western critical theoretical approaches and the assumptions upheld by an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm on the inseparability of values and reality, religion remains, from the perspective of these critical approaches, a marginal source of the system of values that is the focus of their interest. The special realist-normative nature of the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm must leave an impact on the different levels of analysis, whether they are holistic and systemic, or particular and related to certain concepts, distinct events, or perspectives on specific incidents.

The special normative nature of the Islamic Paradigm is reflected on its basic concepts, on the one hand, and on the comparative concepts with Western paradigms. Whereas the concepts of *tawhīd*, *daʿwah*, *jihad*, *ʿumrān*, and *istikhlāf* are special fundamental Islamic concepts, the concepts of interest, power, and conflict, for example, are among the comparative concepts.

The external functions of the Islamic state, the interests of the Ummah or Muslim states, the tools serving and protecting these interests, and the factors of strength and weakness, etc., all have, according to the Islamic paradigm, non-material (normative) dimensions in addition to their traditional material dimensions in which Western paradigms are principally interested.

The preceding account has sought to clarify, in light of the nature and characteristics of an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm, the aspects of divergence between values as perceived by an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm, on the one hand, and values as perceived by positivist paradigms and critical approaches, on the other.

The Qur'anic perspective of international relations is not to be found in the Qur'anic verses that serve as sources for Islamic legal rulings only, but also in the verses providing the holistic Islamic perspective on the human being, the universe, life, and time. This Qur'anic perspective allows for a new *ijtihad* from a comprehensive civilizational approach that moves beyond the narrow and partial jurisprudential approach, which revolves only around the issues of managing war or peace.

The term “civilizational” implies a holistic approach to political, economic, and other dimensions; a comprehensive perspective encompassing the past, present, and future and the multiplicity of levels of the universal and particular; integration, rather than opposition, between the binaries (including divine revelation and reason, values and reality, the constant and the variable); and the integration between jurisprudential rulings and the views of the reality of the world and humankind. The Islamic civilizational paradigm goes beyond the jurisprudential foundation to the civilizational foundation.

## Chapter Nine

### **THE ASSUMPTIONS OF AN ISLAMIC CIVILIZATIONAL PARADIGM: A COMPARATIVE MAP**

Here, I compare the Islamic Paradigm with the three major Western paradigms of realism, pluralism, and structuralism in terms of basic substance and assumptions. These include: the origin of international relations and their driving force; actors and levels of analysis; the types of issues that should be given priority; comparative concepts; the perspective on world division and the classification of states; and the relationship between the external and the internal.

A strong and essential focal point of analysis has been a comparison of the assumptions and hypotheses of the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm against those formulated by the three traditional, dominant Western paradigms as well as the multiple schools of thought underlying them. Comparison has also involved consultation of both Arab

and Western literature in the field of Islamic Studies to complement and support research, where the scope of topics addressed has fallen into the purview of International Relations.

### 9.1 Mapping The Assumptions of the Paradigms: A Horizontal Comparison

A comparison between the concept of power as understood by the different paradigms reveals a relationship between the Islamic concepts of conflict, cooperation, and *daʿwah* in the following ways: a struggle for power to achieve national interest and through the mechanisms of balance of power, as in realism; a struggle for welfare, whereby welfare is considered to be the basis of power and the driver towards the homogenization of interests, as in pluralism; a class struggle within the global capitalist system as a driver towards a final, ideal stage in which the capitalist system collapses, as in Marxist radicalism; and finally, *daʿwah* as the origin and driver of relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, reflecting the nature of Islam as being a message for the whole world.

Whereas realism highlights conflictual types of processes and stresses the importance of military power and acknowledges the possibility of war, pluralism and liberalism belittle the importance of military power in conflict management and highlight the mechanisms of collective as well as multilateral peaceful international competition management.

The means of jihad, therefore, may be through one's moral/spiritual capacity (e.g., the struggle for self-discipline and restraining oneself from sin, such as refraining from backbiting, slander, etc.), or intellectual capacity (e.g., resolving an issue through research), or physical capacity (e.g., developing environmentally friendly technology or fighting in self-defense) Many scholars emphasize this broad definition of jihad.

The controversial interpretations of some Qur'anic verses about jihad (especially the verse known as the verse of the sword), have resulted in multiple answers to the question of whether – according to the Muslim perspective – war or peace are the drivers of relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. The paradigm introduces a new *ijtihad*, according to which the driver of these relations is considered to be *daʿwah* in the sense of enlightenment about Islam and Islamic values through various non-coercive, tactful, and polite means, such as through education and/or exemplification of Islamic teachings and values.

The relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims does not revolve around a search for hegemony or material gains for the sake of increasing influence, rather it entails different kinds of interactions, all of which should serve the purpose of promoting *da'wah* and introducing the Muslim value system to the world for the sake of a more just and humane world.

According to the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm, power is essential, as an absolute abandonment of force is neither desired, nor possible. However, understanding the role of power in international relations (when to use it, how and for what purpose) is inseparable from the concepts of *da'wah* and jihad.

Calling upon the comprehensive meaning of the concept of jihad is essential for responding to claims that the Islamic conquests resorted to violence in order to spread Islam and imposed Islam on conquered places using military force. The comprehensive meaning of the concept of jihad is also essential for responding to claims that jihad is the equivalent of war and that Muslims have only been manipulating the revealed texts so as to advocate the use of military power at times of their strength and to advocate peace at times of their weakness.

The Islamic Paradigm proposes the “Muslim Ummah” as a level and unit of analysis, while recognizing its internal organizational variations, be they states or communities. The Islamic Civilizational Paradigm integrates civilizational, cultural, economic, and political dimensions, and gives priority to immaterial variables, without foregoing material ones. That is a reflection of Islam’s holistic, non-reductionist vision of the universe, manifest in concepts such as *da'wah* or comprehensive power, and in the paradigm’s conception of the types of interactions.

The Islamic Civilizational Paradigm maintains a relationship of continuous mutual influence, wherein both the internal and external aspects receive equal importance, and wherein the relationship proceeds from the internal to the external.

## 9.2 Mapping the Assumptions of the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm

The preceding horizontal comparison shows that the methodological and thematic dimensions of each paradigm constitute a system, wherein the driver of international relations directly relates to the concept of power, the relevant processes and issues, and the units and



levels of analysis. This interrelationship between the methodology of the paradigm and the substance of its assumptions can be further highlighted by a vertical comparison between the different assumptions of the paradigms.

These various and diverse concepts can be divided into two groups: The first group includes foundational, key concepts common among the discipline of international relations and other disciplines from an Islamic perspective, such as *tawhīd*, *tazkiyyah*, and *ʿumrān*. The second group includes concepts peculiar to the discipline of international relations, including concepts that derive from the particular and unique character of Islamic origins and heritage (jihad, *daʿwah*, *taʿāruf*, *tadāwul*, *tadāfuʿ*, *nuṣrah*, *ḥadarah*, Ummah, Muslim Ummah).

There is a need to identify the systems of concepts and draw their maps, whether as intellectual concepts per se or as intellectual sources for constructing the theoretical frameworks for studying international relations from a comparative Islamic Civilizational Paradigm. For example, a map including the following four comparative conceptual systems can be drawn: *daʿwah*, power, and jihad; community, the Ummah (each group for whom a messenger was sent, whether they believed or disbelieved), the Muslim Ummah (the whole community of Muslims bound together by ties of Islam), the Islamic state, and the nation-state; jihad, war, peace, cooperation, conflict, *tadāfuʿ*, universalism, and globalization; and diversity, plurality, *taʿāruf*, dialogue, and *tadāwul* (rotation). The first three of these systems revolve around drivers of international relations, levels of analysis and actors, and tools and processes respectively.

The fourth system with principles, foundations, rules, and values that guide the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims provides the necessary frame of reference and methodological approach for the study of international relations. Consequently, this Islamic Civilizational Paradigm breaks the mono-poly of the traditional political jurisprudential paradigm on the study of international relations in Islam (jihad, war, and peace), without underestimating the necessity and vitality of jurisprudence for such a study, while asserting that it cannot alone provide a full picture of international relations in Islam. This fourth system introduces a constructional perspective that neither takes war nor peace as the base of international relations but shows when to resort to war and when to resort to peace and the rules for managing each of the two conditions.

The core features of the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm can be summed up as follows:

- It is neither idealist nor merely “theoretical”; it neither ignores existing reality, nor aims to consecrate it;
- It departs from an integrated epistemological system, guided by an extensive historical experience, to explain and evaluate existing reality with the goal of changing it;
- It adopts a holistic perspective that includes the material, immaterial, realist, idealist, and the internal, as well as the external political, economic, military, and cultural dimensions.

### 9.3 *Da‘wah*, Power, and Jihad

The concept of power or jihad in Islam cannot be understood apart from the concept of *da‘wah*, which provides, according to some Muslim scholars and political theorists and also according to the normative approach adopted by the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm, the religious foundation of international relations in Islam. The activation of the seven element value system approach is an ongoing process of jihad (striving – whether morally, spiritually, or physically – toward that which is good or of benefit and with the aim of pleasing God) that is related to the individual, the Ummah, external relations, internal relations, war, and peace.

The seven element normative approach, which is the frame of reference for the Project of International Relations in Islam, maintains that peace and war alone cannot form the grounds for Muslim relations with the non-Muslim other. Both the historical context and the state of the capabilities of power determine when does war or when does peace seem to be an effective option so that civilizational action remains committed to *da‘wah* as an invitation to or enlightenment about Islam and Islamic values through various non-coercive, tactful, and polite means and to jihad as a value and a tool at the same time.

The changing concepts of power reveal the extent of theoretical flux in response to ongoing changes in international reality and reveal how the internationally dominant Western powers evoke different concepts of power to further their political, economic, and cultural forms of dominance.

By contrast, an Islamic concept of power is based on the following

assumptions: the possession of power is a matter of *istikhlāf*, as human beings practice the successive authority upon earth. It furthers the purpose of *‘umrān*, as it is the responsibility of human beings to promote growth and prosperity on earth. Hence, power should neither serve transgression, nor falter in the face of injustice. Such a conception of power even necessitates a redefinition of the concept of politics itself so that it comes to mean “to set things aright/to foster reform or betterment.”

It is important to note that while the inner struggle toward moral and spiritual refinement and striving for the acquisition of knowledge occupies a central place with the concept of jihad, it does not preclude armed jihad at times of necessity. Contrary to Western understanding of jihad as a war of aggression, it could be argued that an alternative third understanding of jihad is possible.

As the different meanings of jihad are context-bound, it is vital to avoid reductionism and to consider why, when, and how the military power is used, and why, when, and how peaceful means become the option. Jihad is a process that employs the tools of peace and war for the service of *da‘wah*. This concept of jihad is both realistic as well as normative, as it accommodates the various contexts and conditions of Muslims at times of strength and weakness, whereby jihad becomes an action that corrects unjust and unequal relations, militarily or peacefully.

#### 9.4 Actors and Units and Levels of Analysis

The critique of the nation-state and debates about its nature, role, and functions have dominated the post-Cold War age of globalization, calling upon debates about the concept of power and its mechanisms. As for the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm, it emphasizes the “Muslim Ummah,” without dismissing the possible existence of organizational variations within the Ummah, be they states, groups, or individuals.

The Islamic Civilizational Paradigm stresses the importance of normative dimensions, highlighting the functions of the state related to faith, jihad, and *‘umrān* vis-a-vis the functions of the state from the perspective of Western paradigms, where the state appears as the protector of national interests, as the provider of welfare, and as a competitive state. The definition of the “Islamic state” in contemporary international reality is beset by other problems that propose a need for

some “foundational standards against which to assess the reality,” in addition to critiques of the consequences of transferring the model of the nation-state to the contemporary Muslim world.

Whereas the post-behavioralist stage set off a discussion of the crisis of the nation-state, the globalization stage incited debate on the future of the nation-state in a way that not only paid attention to non-state actors but also to levels of analysis that transcend the traditional state and international levels of analysis. Although many religious, social, and political studies have elaborated on the concept, it was thanks to the pioneering efforts of Hamed Rabie and Mona Abul-Fadl that the concept’s relevance for political science has received attention.

Hamed Rabie during the 1970s and early 1980s, developed an agenda of the issues that he thought were relevant to the Muslim Ummah and were worth attention. Mona Abul-Fadl considered it a mission for the researcher to turn the Ummah from a mere subject of study into a concept, where a romanticized perception of the Ummah was replaced by voluntary conscious interactions. She suggested a reflection on the Ummah as a means for solving the problems of identity and belonging, and as an approach to tackling the questions of government, political systems, and Islamic international relations.

She also maintained that the Ummah was that distinct, fundamental collective entity, created by faith and *da‘wah*, that embodied the subjective, objective, material, and immaterial aspects of the shared and diversified existence of the Muslim community. The fate of the Ummah was, therefore, inseparable from the path of faith/*da‘wah*.

The Ummah, defined as the Muslim community, should be perceived as an origin or a foundation, as it is the repository of the Islamic message, from which the “Imam” (the head of the Muslim community) and the state are derived; and therefore, the absence of the Imam does not negate the presence of the Ummah, because it is the latter, according to the Muslim creed and law, that gives rise to regimes in Islam.

The preceding methodological foundation has revealed that the religious tie is the basis for the emergence, continuity, and survival of the Ummah. So, the Ummah, in modern political language, represents a civilizational and cultural zone, within which interactions and relations are taking place. When tackling the historical experience of

the Muslim Ummah, the Project of International Relations in Islam treated the Muslim Ummah as an international system, and the systemic approach was used to study its changing position within the international system. The Islamic Civilizational Paradigm proposes the Ummah as a level of analysis, making, therewith, a contribution to the accumulating research reflecting a renewed interest in values, cultures, and religion in social sciences in general and international relations theory in particular.

Amani Saleh's analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of addressing the Ummah as a level of analysis points to the fact that the Ummah as a level of analysis transcends the mere call for focusing on non-state actors along with states, as the Ummah as a level of analysis is interconnected with all three levels of analysis that have been regularly addressed by dominant Western paradigms (i.e., the individual, the state, and the international levels of analysis).

Like the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm in general, the Ummah as a level of analysis receives methodological, theoretical, and epistemological criticisms, the most important of which revolve around the agenda of issues to be studied at this level, the methodology for their study, and the indicators of whether the Ummah exists or not.

Globalization provides the systemic framework for locating the Ummah within the international and global system and provides a structure that challenges the realist concept of power and addresses the cultural and religious aspects of different issues and tools without dismissing the importance of political, military, and economic aspects.

### 9.5 International Processes, Interactions, and Tools

Because it is normative and civilizational in essence, the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm is founded on a humane acquaintance-driven perspective that calls upon different patterns of general or partial processes. Mapping the subsidiaries of these processes could highlight the following: first, divine laws governing international interactions (namely, difference, diversity, heterogeneity, *ta'āruf*, dialogue; civilizational *tadāwul*, civilizational *tadāfu'*, civilizational balance, civilizational *shuhūd* (being witnesses to humankind/the opposite of absence); *ibtālā'* of nations (trial), tyranny, and hubris); second, globalization-globalism/universalism and the clash/dialogue of cultures and civilizations; and third, global reform/change, global democracy, human justice, and the message of Islam.

## 9.6 The System of Interrelated and Concerted Issues

The Islamic Paradigm's agenda of issues necessarily reflects the rising importance of religious, cultural, and civilizational dimensions (which are by their very nature normative) in explaining and analyzing international interactions, alongside other aspects, thus transcending the continuous oscillation of Western paradigms between giving priority to one dimension or another. The studies that reflected on the normative dimension with reference to the sources of Islamic thought and history addressed different areas: the explanation of the rise and fall of nations and civilizations as well as the explanation of the systemic development of Islamic history and other histories as well.

One telling example of these studies warns against the consequences of considering culture to be the only factor behind the current clash between the West and the Islamic world since 2001. That is because cultural and social change, according to this study, are inseparable from the political change that was imposed from above by the modern colonial push on the Ummah and the world.

This system addresses the issues of peoples, nations, homelands, communities, and individuals. These four systems of concepts, discussed in the preceding sections, are cumulative and integrated systems that contribute to the construction of an Islamic civilizational perspective that pays due and proper attention to the different dimensions of international relations without one dimension receiving the attention at the expense of all the other dimensions.

The construction of these systems of concepts requires attention being paid to the complex relationship between the state of Islamic unity, the Muslim relations with the non-Muslim other, and the Islamic internal model.

Constructing concepts such as jihad, power, the Ummah, and the state from the perspective of an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm and in a way that corresponds to the requirements of the international relations discipline differs from the treatment of these concepts in Islamic Studies in general or the study of Islamic political thought in particular. The plurality and diversity of such responses mitigate the crisis resulting from epistemological unilateralism and fluctuations between binary oppositions. Built upon a constant that manages such diversity, this Islamic paradigm humanizes politics and change for all humanity at

both Islamic and global levels, as it founds a relationship between values and existing reality, on the one hand, and values, action, and practice, on the other.

## Chapter Ten

### **APPLYING THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE TO CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ISSUES: MOTIVES AND CRITICISM**

The main criticism of the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm centers on its credibility in the study of global conditions in general and solving the problems of the Islamic world in particular. Since the 1970s and 1980s, critiques of the discipline have shown that the theories of development, the theories of foreign policy, and other Western theories are not adequate for studying the conditions of the Third World. The growing importance of the Marxist contribution to the discipline of international relations during the last three decades of the 20th century reflected the correlation between theoretical revisions and practical necessities, leading, thereby, to the criticism of Western political, theoretical, and intellectual centrism, though from within Western circles. These factors have provided evidence and justification for the necessity of an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm.

The conditions of the Muslim Ummah and its position within the international system, especially throughout the past three decades, provide enough justification for an Islamic paradigm that offers theoretical insights into the problems of the Ummah and the world, not for the sake of theorizing per se but for the sake of guiding actions and proposing solutions. The writings of many Muslim scholars tackle two interrelated problems: (1) the world needs an Islamic model that contributes to global societal and intellectual renewal; and (2) intellectual and epistemological innovation at the level of the Ummah is a necessary condition for reinvigorating its powers and for contributing to world stability and security.

These and similar contributions do not draw on utopian perceptions, blinded to the actual problems of the contemporary Muslim world.

Rather, they argue that the way to solve the problems of the Muslim world is not to address them domestically only, but to address them globally through a serious participation in solving global problems that have their consequences on the Muslim world.

Practical necessities led some scholars from outside the circle of the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm to recognize the importance of developing an Islamic civilizational perspective of International Relations. However, some of them correlate these necessities with the need for studying and understanding the implications of the Islamic phenomenon, which they call “religious fundamentalism,” on the post-Cold-War international system, wherein the cultural dimensions of international politics come to the fore because of globalization, fragmentation, and a permanent state of flux. Other scholars argue that the study of the problems and concerns of one fifth of the world population, those problems and concerns that happen to evoke current global interest also, require a paradigm that grasps their particularity, and demonstrates the extent to which Islam can play a role, when it comes to specifying their causes, motives, and possible solutions.

The efforts of the Egyptian School of an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm caught the attention of some prominent scholars, including Bahgat Korany, as a school that shares, along with the critical approaches in the discipline, interest in values, thought, history, and a new agenda of issues. Throughout the first decade of the 21st century, a growing Western interest in the study of the conditions of the Islamic World was accompanied by a growing Western interest in the Islamic perspective on international relations; an interest that is though quite distinct from the traditional Orientalist interest.

### 10.1 Areas and Objectives of Application

The relations between Islam and the West need to be located on the map of the development of international Islamic thought. Worth emphasizing are elements of continuity versus elements of change and the factors shaping and influencing these debates. Reading the international thought of the Ummah and its development helps us examine the stages of the rise and fall of the Ummah and the causes of its strength and weakness, compared to other nations.

To confront self-flagellation, conceptual chaos, and the war of ideas that the West has waged against Muslims in the age of globalization,



intellectual renewal is needed as an end in itself and a means to guide a rational *tadāfu*<sup>c</sup> process. The Qur'anic perspective requires a deep understanding of reality in light of the holistic Islamic perspective, not only for the purpose of reaching new jurisprudential rulings on specific issues, but also for the purpose of providing a holistic intellectual perspective on these con-ditions from external, internal, and intermediary approaches.

By closely examining the development of Islamic civilizational thought, a contemporary Islamic humane discourse can be formulated; one that bridges the gap between the discourse of conflict and division (which is a mere contemporary literal repetition of the discourse of the “abode of peace” and the “abode of war”) and the discourse of surrender and submission (upholding the culture of peace and tolerance, while taking the form of apology and defense).

Reflecting on the foundational perspective of international relations in Islam and relations with the other must respond, according to the rules of *ijtihād* and renewal, to the foreign challenges and threats that beset the contemporary reality of Muslims in a way that fulfills the purposes of Shari'ah. Moreover, this renewed perspective should not remain confined to thought, for although thought entails necessarily a sort of activation, such a perspective needs to move beyond activation to application.

Reflecting on the foundational and constructional sources of the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm and its characteristics is not a goal in itself, rather it is a means to explore global conditions and to provide an Islamic perspective (or perspectives) on the causes of these conditions and the way to manage and change them. Global conditions have their strong influence on Muslims. Whereas public policies in the Muslim world have acquired obvious international dimensions, they are also connected with contemporary global issues that are closely related to the domestic conditions of the Islamic world. Public policies serve as a link between the jurisprudential foundation, the civilizational foundation and the intellectual projects on the one hand and their application in reality on the other. Therefore, mapping global issues related to Islamic states is a strategic step that follows the stage of foundation.

These global issues can be divided into the following categories: issues of reform, change and the building of human security; issues of

development and the building of economic power and security; issues related to the building of military power and security; issues related to the Islamic circle in the foreign policy of Muslim states or non-Muslim great powers; issues related to Islamic and trans-civilizational inter-relationships; issues related to regional and trans-regional conflicts in the Muslim world; issues related to Muslims in the West; issues related to civilizational dialogue and *ta'āruḥ*; and issues related to the reformation of the global system, seeking to make it more democratic and just.

The discussion of globalization from an Islamic perspective therefore raises four main issues.

*First*, there are questions and discourses related to war and peace that are relevant to a critical discussion of the uses of military power in Muslim majority countries, whether domestically, regionally, or trans-regionally.

*Second*, there is the question of the relations between civilizations needed to confront the polarized discourses that classify these relations as either relations of conflict or relations of dialogue.

*Third*, there is the question of Muslim political movements and the process of reform within the Ummah, which is a process with internal as well as external aspects.

*Fourth*, there is the question of reforming the global system and how Muslims, whether living in Muslim states or in the West, can take part in this reform.

## 10.2 The Islamic Civilizational Paradigm Questioned, Refuted, and Criticized

There is no direct methodological or theoretical debate or dialogue between dominant or critical Western paradigms and nascent non-Western schools, perspectives, or paradigms, comparable to the three great debates, the following inter-paradigm debates, or the great fourth debate. As a result, there has thus been a plethora of contrasting and opposite views about the influence of Islam and Muslims on the international system after the Cold War and globalization.

The major features of the encounter between the arguments put

forward by the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm and those who adopt other paradigms in the Department of Political Science at Cairo University can be summarized as follows:

1. A paradigm is a scientific approach that is not supposed to be biased in favor of an Islamic or a non-Islamic point of view.
2. Western academic production in the field of international relations in general is sufficient to serve the goals of international study. Moreover, this production engages in a continuous process of self-reflection with the purpose of achieving more internal cohesion. Therefore, we can depend on it confidently without the need for adopting a new paradigm.
3. Western scholars do not confine themselves to narrow theoretical frameworks, and they show an obvious degree of flexibility as they exchange their concepts with and borrow them from different intellectual schools, so why should we, instead, limit ourselves to a single secluded paradigm?
4. In contrast to the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm, most Western thought revolves around reality. Shouldn't that characteristic be regarded as one advantage of Western paradigms? Moreover, any paradigm aims to understand reality, and, therefore, the strong connection between Western paradigms and reality should not become a subject of criticism, especially because reality in the Western environment is a reality of strength, upon which a whole academic discipline could be founded, rather than a reality of weakness as is the case with the contemporary Muslim reality.
5. If the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm is not expected to provide except wishful thinking that does not help much in understanding reality, is this the right time for holding onto ideological statements and slogans that are void of any analytical capacity?
6. If the Islamic Paradigm is driven by the goal of crystallizing a civilizational identity with integrated dimensions, then why isn't the question of identity translated into an Arab paradigm of international relations, rather than an Islamic one?
7. Western theorizing was born of a desire to explain reality, and when reality changes, theorizing does too. Therefore, the strength of Western theorizing derives from its being explanatory. By contrast, the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm is proposed now at the time of the civilizational crisis of the Ummah. Can the theorizing drawn from the paradigm serve as a means to get out of this crisis? Does the far-fetched idealistic image that this paradigm is propagating suggest a route to its own application in reality? Or

is it limited to specifying the ought-to-be image of reality? Hence, the challenge that faces the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm lies in its ability to explain reality and to be activated for the purpose of changing that reality.

8. The Islamic Civilizational Paradigm as such has existed for fourteen centuries, so what are the conditions and causes that have led to reintroducing it now as if it were something new?
9. Why wasn't the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm of IR introduced to students at earlier stages of education? Why is it introduced to them all of a sudden after four years of undergraduate study?
10. Why is the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm studied in comparison with the Western paradigms of the discipline? Why is the study of the Islamic Paradigm linked to the modern discipline of international relations? Is the West interested in studying the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm as an academic tradition?
11. Compared to already existing Islamic studies that are interested in international interactions and relations, what is the value added of the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm?
12. How can real politics that does not abide by values and ethics be linked to this paradigm that is based on religious sources with a fundamental normative content?
13. Is interest in motives and justifications intentional and deliberate just to confer legitimacy on the new paradigm within Western academic circles or does the paradigm derive its legitimacy from other sources?
14. What is the meaning of a paradigm, a frame of reference, and episteme? Is jurisprudence the only ground for the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm? What is the Islamic methodology?
15. What are the conditions under which an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm could grow and develop? How can it be accepted and acknowledged regionally and globally? Does the material weakness of the Ummah impede the development of this paradigm and its acceptance within the academic circles of the discipline? Are the efforts of developing the paradigm mere reactions to this weakness of the Ummah and an expression of the need for self-assertion, even if at the intellectual level alone?
16. Proposing an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm paves the way for proposing other religious paradigms; is there a Jewish or Christian paradigm? Is the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm the last among the religious paradigms?
17. When studying international relations, how can the Islamic sources be consulted? Is not this task particularly difficult in the

absence of specialization in religious studies, especially that the books of jurisprudence, exegesis, and Sunnah are difficult and ambiguous?

18. Speaking about an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm makes us feel distanced from reality, because it presents an ideal model very distant from reality. Therefore, the paradigm lacks the credibility driven from its being applicable. It is inapplicable because there are no links between contemporary reality and the teachings of religion.
19. How can we speak about a Civilizational Paradigm revolving around the external relations of the Muslim Ummah, whereas this Ummah does not exist because Muslims have been experiencing internal wars since the Great Sedition (or *Fitnah*)? Moreover, are there any Islamic states for us to speak about an Islamic Paradigm of their international relations?
20. Does not interest in introducing an Islamic Civilizational Paradigm imply cutting ties with non-Muslims, rejecting the idea of citizenship, and portraying Christians as non-believers?
21. What is the relationship between the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm and other paradigms of international relations? Is it a relationship of detachment, seclusion, and superiority? Is it, rather a relationship of mutual critique and comparison so that intellectual fertilization and epistemological communication can take place? Is this latter kind of relationship possible between a religiously rooted paradigm and secular ones?
22. Are there any specific Islamic methods and tools for the study of the international phenomena, or is the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm confined to a frame of reference and rules for viewing the world, not for analyzing or studying it? Will we engage in criticizing Western research methods and methodology, without specifying an Islamic alternative?
23. The Western discipline of international relations analyzes and explains all types of relations among all types of actors, so will the Islamic Paradigm be confined to relations between Muslims and non-Muslims or relations among Muslims alone?
24. How can the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm – or any other paradigm – be acquired? Does it have a cultural character, or is it a learning process with organized foundations?

These reactions, coming basically from specialists, ranged from refutation and rejection of the notion and the project as such to cautiously inquiring about the credibility of the paradigm, its feasibility, and the challenges it should confront.

The first set of arguments (refutation and rejection) is in fact laden with epistemological biases, maintaining that the “religious” is the opposite of the “scientific,” and that research tools and methods have universal applicability. Besides, it rejects the notion that Islam can produce knowledge and science because it views it as a mere religion.

As for the second set of arguments (adopting a supportive position or expressing reservations), it either welcomes introducing Islamic sources or contributions of Muslim thinkers to the fields of political science and economics, while recognizing how challenging that is, or cautiously stresses that the real value added of this endeavor is not to prove that Muslims have been an exception in history, but rather that Muslims have contributed thought, theory and findings that served humanity, that they have been one rich and fertile subsidiary of humanity.

A third set of arguments and positions has gradually crystallized, though among a few professors of international relations, especially Bahgat Korany. This set of arguments approaches the Islamic Civilizational Paradigm of International Relations with reference to the rising critical approaches in the discipline of international relations.

Bahgat Korany argues that the interest in an Islamic civilizational paradigm generally falls within the scope of the interests of critical theories, which direct criticism at the realist, positivist American school of IR and refuse to acknowledge its universality. Korany highlights that the Islamic Paradigm of IR moves beyond the fragmentation of the field, as it engages with literature from different strands of international relations theory. Moreover, the paradigm transcends the debate between international relations theory and history on the one hand and values on the other. The paradigm, according to him, does not sanctify its own intellectual construct, but rather highlights the diversity and plurality of opinions and reasonings. The discipline of international relations is, therefore, in need for this project in its pursuit of diversity and globalization.

It is worth noting, that throughout two decades, the Islamic paradigm has been mainly put on academic “trial,” rather than debated or subjected to epistemological or theoretical academic discussion in a manner like that known to Western academic circles, between dominant and emerging paradigms or theories. Different sets of arguments, raising various concerns and questions, have been

predominantly dealing with the paradigm as a deviation from the norms of science, as if the “dominant secular Western discourse” was the only discourse allowed to set the definition of science.

Many of the aforementioned stances and positions, which continued to exist throughout the last decade, still interrogate and question the very notion and conception of an Islamic paradigm. Very much needed is a discussion of and engagement with the outcomes of the processes of construction and activation that ensued the inauguration of the Project of IR in Islam in 1997.

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