

STATES DO NOT GO TO HEAVEN

Towards a Theory of Islamic Agency
in International Relations

MESHARI ALRUWAIH



**States Do Not Go to Heaven: Towards a Theory of
Islamic Agency in International Relations**

States do Not Go to Heaven:

Towards a Theory of Islamic Agency in International Relations

Meshari Alruwaih



The International Institute of Islamic Thought
London · Washington

© THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT
1434AH/2013CE

THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT
P.O. BOX 669, HERNDON, VA 20172, USA
www.iiit.org

LONDON OFFICE
P.O. BOX 126, RICHMOND, SURREY TW9 2UD, UK
www.iiituk.com

*This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of the publishers.*

ISBN 978-1-56564-556-1 paperback

*The views and opinions expressed in this book are those of the author
and not necessarily those of the publisher. The publisher is not
responsible for the accuracy of the information presented.*

Typesetting and cover design by Sideek Ali

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	vii
<i>Introduction</i>	ix

1

“Reclaiming Reality”: Human Agency as Vicegerency	1
The Superstructure of <i>Istikhlāf</i> : Allah, Man, and Earth	4
Endowment: “Making of a <i>Khalīfah</i> ”	12
Embedment: Earth as a “Field of <i>Istikhlāf</i> ”	17
From Embedment to Embodiment: The <i>Khalīfah</i> “in Action”	26
Conclusion	34

2

The <i>Khalīfah</i> is Not Allowed In: The Ontological Barriers to Islamic Agency in International Relations	36
‘Member of the International Society’ as a Social Role	37
From the Modern Individual to the Modern International Society	41
IR Theory: ‘Only the Modern Individual is Allowed In’	47
Conclusion	52

3

The <i>Khalīfah</i> in International Relations	53
Opening the Gates of International Relations to the <i>Khalīfah</i>	54
On the Road to the International Level: Bringing in the <i>Khalīfah</i>	59
Islamic Community: Teaching <i>Istikhlāf</i>	60
The State Level: The Moral Test of Activating the Causal Powers of the State	63

The International Level: The <i>Khalifah</i> Meets The Individual... It's Not Personal...It's Structural	65
<i>Conclusion</i>	70
<i>Notes</i>	73

Foreword

States Do Not Go to Heaven: Towards a Theory of Islamic Agency in International Relations compares and contrasts, according to the author, Islamic worldviews and Western theoretical perspectives on international relations. Alruwaih suggests that a combination of the two could lead to a mutually beneficial redefinition of contemporary international relations utilizing Western theoretical tools and incorporating an Islamic perspective. Particular focus is given to the Islamic concept of *Istikhlāf* as an ontological and normative foundation.

Where dates are cited according to the Islamic calendar (hijrah) they are labelled AH. Otherwise they follow the Gregorian calendar and labelled CE where necessary. Arabic words are italicized except for those which have entered common usage. Diacritical marks have been added only to those Arabic names not considered contemporary.

Since its establishment in 1981, the IIIT has continued to serve as a major center to facilitate serious scholarly efforts, based on Islamic vision, values and principles. The Institute's programs of research, and seminars and conferences, during the last thirty years, have resulted in the publication of more than four hundred titles in both English, Arabic and other major languages.

We would like to express our thanks to the author for his cooperation and to the editorial and production team at the IIIT London Office, and all those who were directly or indirectly involved in the completion of this work.

IIIT London Office
August 2013

[O MEN!] We have now bestowed upon you from on high a divine writ containing all that you ought to bear in mind, will you not, then, use your reason?

(Qur'an: 21:10)

Introduction

This book is a result of my Masters dissertation, which was awarded a distinction from Durham University. While I chose to keep the title, overall framework, and main arguments intact, the opportunity to publish my work through the International Institute of Islamic Thought necessitates taking into account a change in audiences, the implications of which effect contextualization, direction, and embedment of those arguments. Writing necessarily involves an inner conversation, one that keeps reminding the author of his overall aims, lifetime intellectual projects, and reward structures. In this case, it's a conversation that reminds one that he is a servant of Allah (SWT),* a Muslim knowledge seeker, and subsequently should have the satisfaction of Allah structuring his rewards both in this life and the after, only that he happens to be interested in international phenomena and “teased” by the explanatory elegance of modern social sciences and the theoretical debates within western International Relations Theory.

Depending on the type of audiences, this inner conversation might come to be explicit in defining the frameworks and forming the context of the research project, or alternatively, remains silenced in the background.

The essential arguments in this book were thought of and written within western academic settings and under the supervision of western scholars, which meant that I had to keep this conversation an inner one. That said, I must endorse the “open” intellectual atmosphere at the School of Government and International Affairs at Durham University where my MA supervisor professor Patrick Stirk and my current PhD supervisors, professor John Williams, and professor Jim Piscatori have shown nothing but respect, interest, and curiosity;

* (SWT) – *Subhānahu wa Ta'ālā*: May He be praised and may His transcendence be affirmed. Said when referring to God.

Introduction

allowing my work to comfortably take a “first person” perspective despite the institutional and disciplinary limitations.

Addressing what I believe would mainly be Muslim postgraduate students in international relations requires making this conversation public since it’s one that we all seem to share. This public conversation has been maintained and sustained by the International Institute of Islamic Thought for decades now under the label of “Islamization of Knowledge.” In particular, Dr. AbdulHamid AbuSulayman’s *Towards an Islamic Theory of International Relations*,¹ and *International Relations in Islam*² project, edited by Dr. Nadia Mustapha, are cornerstones in publicizing and institutionalizing this aspiration of individual Muslim International Relations researchers to embed their research activities in their belief systems. This book builds on these works in order to place itself in the chain of knowledge accumulation on developing an Islamic perspective on contemporary international relations. In light of this, I humbly hope that this book will contribute to the consolidation of the Islamization of knowledge of international relations in three ways: First, through embedding efforts in Islamization of knowledge of contemporary international relations in a relational structure between traditional Islamic Fiqh related to Muslims–non–Muslims relations (*siyar*) on the one hand, and understanding the properties, nature, and policy needs of Islamic actors in contemporary international politics on the other hand. Second, through heavier involvement with western International Relations theoretical frameworks, such involvement should not be viewed, strictly, as culturally based critique, but more importantly as an effort to assess the possibility of borrowing from those frameworks to better, theoretically, express Islamic action in international politics, while preserving its legal and normative bases. Third, this book goes beyond most attempts in this direction by actually utilizing explanatory tools and frameworks from western social and International Relations theory in order to better express and operationalize Islamic actors in world politics. This takes the efforts of the Islamization of knowledge on international relations from general outlines and ideas to the specificities and technicality of implementing those ideas.

Introduction

The first aim of formulating a contemporary Islamic perspective on international relations on the landscape of competing discourse in the Muslim world, should be based on an assessment of the relevancy of those discourses to the understanding of the nature, properties, and hence the needs of Islamic actors in international politics. Aside from our approach, there are two main competing discourses on Islamic involvement in contemporary international politics, one is normative/and legalistically produced and reproduced by traditional Muslim scholars, while the other is realist/secular sustained by mainly political analysts drawing on more than anything, strategic and security studies. In between the two well-intentioned Islamic actors and foreign policy-makers seem to be unsatisfied with the partial image each has to offer. Where the former has taken the shape of disconnected fatwas and rulings that lack an appreciation of the structural constraints/resources to moral actions at macro social arrangements like those of the modern international society, the latter, only “see” structures in their most deterministic materialist worldly sense of the concept, subsequently following the realist assumption that there can never be a space for moral action in international relations, and hence leading to a focus on a narrow range of day-to-day strategic moves. This approach, which is based on purely realist assumptions, does not, and cannot, serve as a convenient departure point for capturing the involvement of Islamic actors in international politics. At least in my view, an Islamic actor is a moral actor by definition. No matter how thick the Islamic symbolic and discursive cover, if an actor is not moral it’s not Islamic. In other words, the label “Islamic” does not do the trick!

For this reason my inclinations lie with the traditional Islamic based normative/legal approach. This approach, while lacking in a theoretical understanding of contemporary international relations and (the much needed) methodological techniques to sustain a research program on the subject matter, preserves the essence of Islamic agency, and equally important is that it ensures that whatever explanatory tools we utilize in our research are governed by Islamic knowledge sources: Qur’an and Sunnah. Consequently, what this approach needs is a theoretical framework that can contribute to approaching Islamic action

Introduction

in international relations in a balanced way, emphasizing agential moral accountability on one hand, and structural constraints and resources on the other.

As mentioned above, this is not the first attempt to energize Islamic thought on international relations. Rather, it builds on variety of such attempts that provide direction and wisdom to my humble attempt in this study. In particular, AbuSulayman's discussion emphasizing the space-time dimension in reforming Islamic methodology in international relations is very helpful in making the argument for the need of a "map" of contemporary international relations if we are to theorize Islamic moral action in international politics. Although time and space are always connected in sustaining reality, AbuSulayman's discussion analytically focuses on the time factor. In here, I want to focus on space. For space implies organization, arrangements, putting "entities" together, resultant relationships between those entities and the emerging patterns of interaction among them. An accurate understanding of space becomes more important when we are faced with macro social arrangements where our actions, even in their collective sense, become the subject of multiple causal forces that stem from the structures and mechanisms that make up such arrangements.

In this light, the question becomes one of "do we have a map of structures and mechanisms of contemporary international relations?" or alternatively "does our traditional map of dividing the world into *Dār al-Salām*, *Dār al-ʿAhd* and *Dār al-Ḥarb* give us an accurate image of the context of Islamic moral action in today's world?" More specifically, once the normative and legal principle is derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah, do we follow suit, collectively as Muslim Knowledge seekers, with an effort to understand how these normative/legal principles can be maintained by Islamic agents under the structures of contemporary international relations? More importantly, do we have an understanding of who the Islamic agent that is morally accountable before Allah and Muslims for sustaining an Islamic moral action is? Is it the Muslim *Ummah*? The Islamic state? Or the individual Muslim human agents who assume the roles of political leaders and government officials? If it is the latter, then why the insistence on the "as if"

Introduction

treatment? That is, “as if” the Islamic state existed and “as if” the Islamic state acted. In this case we keep referring to one entity: “the Islamic state” while what we really mean is the Muslim human agents who assume the roles of political leaders and state officials. On the other hand, if we really mean that the Islamic state is our moral reference point that carries out Islamic normative and legal principles then how do we expect “the state” a corporate entity to be morally accountable?

Some of these questions are clearly beyond the arguments in this book; they do however help in setting the context and direction of the discussions in subsequent chapters. In particular, they are helpful in positioning the project of Islamization of knowledge on international relations in between Islamic legal and normative principles on the one hand and the purely secular strategic discourse on the other, promising more relevant and suitable outcomes for the needs of Islamic agents in contemporary international politics.

This set the stage for the second contribution of this book, which is heavier involvement with western IR theory. This involvement is not an aim in itself. Rather, it’s a necessary stage in enhancing an Islamic perspective on international relations. The lack of contemporary Islamic-based answers to the set of questions represented above necessitates the borrowing of explanatory frameworks in order to enhance our capacities to better apply our normative and legal solutions to international politics. Going along with the “map” metaphor, western theories of international relations are better viewed as such. But while the most used visual maps capture political borders, International Relations theories are maps that capture the social arrangements of the international life, each claiming to represent a more accurate and coherent image of structures and patterns of interactions in contemporary international relations. Theories are also like maps in that both are abstractions and simplifications of the complexity of the real world. Accordingly, they only capture entities, processes, and relationships that are thought to be more important in explaining and understanding international relations. In this light, some focus on material capabilities and the resulting balance of power between state-based actors, while

Introduction

others focus on the shared culture that gives meanings to actions of international actors, and others still focus on international institutions and organizations and their role in governing interaction among states. Our task as Muslim international relations researchers is to assess the explanatory powers of those theories in light of their capacity to better express our worldviews and moral actions in international relations.

It is important to understand that there is nothing inevitable about those theories. They are man-made tools just like the real world social arrangements that they are utilized to capture. As a matter of fact, western international relations theories are among the least settled and “confident” among western social sciences. In this sense, we can be as playful and creative as possible as long as we do so on sound ontological grounds. Once we have a grand Islamic ontology in place and normative and legal principles derived from Islamic sources (the Qur’an and Sunnah), we can assess those theories on our “own ground.”

Given the lack of confidence in western theoretical frameworks by its own practitioners,³ most mature debates in the discipline are still sustained at the ontological and meta-theoretical levels. For some Islamic observers this might seem like a “turn off.” On the contrary, I believe that this is an opportunity that we should not miss. I believe that after centuries of development of western secular social sciences and their domination of academic institutions and research programs in many parts of the Muslim world, we, as Muslim international relations researchers, are lucky to operate in a discipline where we can still argue about ontology; where we can still argue about the nature of entities, processes, and structures in the social world and hence about the nature of the social arrangements of international relations.

The attempt in this book to develop a framework to better express Islamic agency in international relations should be viewed in this light. It does not stop at constructing an Islamic ontology and deriving Islamic normative and legal principles and then leaving real world Islamic agents, of course in their human sense, wondering about how to apply these principles to their day-to-day operations and actions in international relations. Nor does it allow those agents off the Islamic moral hook, at least in theory, as in the case by the dominant strategic

Introduction

secular discourse in the region. That said, it is important to mention that this book does not offer a policymaking guide to Islamic agents, nor is it a book of normative and legal Islamic principles on international relations, rather, it is an attempt to develop a framework of Islamic agency in international relations as a “constrained/enabled moral action,” one that specifies the sources of moral accountability on the one hand, and causal constraints and resources on the other when approaching research problems that are concerned with Islamic based actions in international relations. In this sense, this is a work for academics and researchers not for policymakers as most discussions in this book will be sustained at the ontological level and not the substantive or even the theoretical levels. Engagement with western IR theory at this level is not an intellectual luxury that we can afford to overlook. Rather, it is a necessary effort to “reclaim reality,” where we can argue at the level of worldviews, nature of the social world, social action, and structures. It is at this level that we can argue about the nature of state action as a corporate entity and the resultant possibilities of moral action in international relations, the explanatory role of social structures of international systems, and the role of human agency within. Only then can we assess the convenience of western IR theories to our purposes in our own ground, otherwise, if the discussions commence at the substantive, or even the theoretical levels then we are most likely to leave behind all that which is “Islamic.”

Despite the unstable philosophical ground that western IR theory is based on, if the Muslim researcher follows its assumptions uncritically, then his/her intellectual effort is more likely to result in reproducing and even unintentionally guarding a very culturally specific understanding of international relations that in many ways might be at odds with his/her own worldviews and belief systems.

The third aim of this book is to construct and propose a framework for Islamic agency in international relations; a long overdue effort that has already been taken in the Islamization of other disciplines, most prominently, Economics and Finance. Within international relations, we still operate at the level of generality, both in terms of theory and methodology. This study is an attempt to go one step further and

Introduction

engage with the technicalities of “putting together” an Islamic “working” framework that can be utilized to approach Islamic action within international relations. Such effort involves a careful selection of literature from both sides, the Islamic and the western, and then constructing one coherent image that can capture the dynamics of international relations and preserve Islamic ontological and normative principles.

Thus far I have been using terms like “ontology,” agency, structure, etc. rather casually. The reason for that is my assumption that postgraduate students are already familiar with these terms. A quick review, however, might help. Ontology is a key word in western social sciences, and increasingly in international relations literature, it refers to a set of answers to questions like, “what is the world made of?”, “what are the nature and properties of entities to be studied?” It refers to “what should we know about the world?” rather than “how should we know it (Epistemology)?” In international relations theory ontological questions have focused around the nature and properties of the structure of international systems; is it purely material? Does it have a social/ideational layer? Do those social dimensions of structures have affects on the behavior, interests, and identity of actors/agents? In the agential side, ontological debates have focused on the nature and properties of agents; are states really agents? Is there such a thing as a corporate agent capable of intentional action? The “trick” however, is that those ontological debates of international relations cannot be answered solely at the level of the “reality of international relations.” Instead, they require answers to questions at yet deeper levels that touch upon the nature and purpose of the social/material world, the nature and purpose of human beings and their interaction. Accordingly, the starting point for an Islamic framework for explaining/understanding any social arrangements should naturally be Islamic, that is, ontology should be Islamic. In other words, involvement with and borrowing from western IR and social theory should start after, not before, we have an Islamic ontology in place.

My choice in this book is to utilize the Islamic notion of *istikhlāf*⁴ as an Islamic ontology, as a convenient point of departure to theorize

Introduction

about Islamic agency in international relations. This choice is not “strange” to efforts associated with the International Institute of Islamic Thought, where many authors have stressed its importance to build a general framework for theorizing in different disciplines. Although the added value of its use in this book is one of articulating it as a “superstructure” linking the human agent, as a *khalīfah*, and earth as a field of *istikhlāf* to Allah as will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

Once we have an Islamic ontology based on *istikhlāf*, where human agency is constituted as vicegerency of Allah on earth, an engagement with western literature will be undertaken in order to assess convenient tools that can best capture the experience of the *khalīfah* in the social world. As mentioned, a direct involvement with western IR theoretical frameworks is not encouraged at this stage, in other words, a “conversation” between *istikhlāf* and western IR frameworks like Neorealism, Neoliberalism, and Constructivism is not fruitful at this time. Rather, what is needed is an engagement with the foundations that underlie those theories, such as: positivism, anti-positivism, and post-positivism. While positivism and anti-positivism are clearly “hostile” to faith-based knowledge, post-positivism is more open to engagement with religion as a foundation for knowledge and theoretical activities. In particular, Critical Realism as a philosophical foundation captures the bulk of the post-positivist movement. Unlike positivist and anti-positivist foundations, however, Critical Realism does not support particular international relations theories. Rather, it is better viewed as an ontological intervention that insists on correcting and reshuffling the ontological landscape underlying the theoretical frameworks of western IR theory according to an ontology of depth and stratification that goes beyond the material observed world, yet does not treat reality as a “social construct” that is not independent from the thoughts and ideas of actors. It asks, and proposes answers to, a number of important questions, including the content and effect of structures, the nature and properties of agents, and insists on a reality beyond the observed material world and the human capacity to know it.

Introduction

Within western international relations theory two prominent contemporary figures stand out as leaders in basing their work on critical realist foundations, namely: Alexander Wendt, and Colin Wight. Both draw on a number of critical realist scholars, most important of whom is Roy Bhaskar. It is Wight who seems to be more “faithful” in following Bhaskar’s guidelines for social theory. In any case, the two critical realist figures have produced important works that re-shaped the ontological landscape of western IR theory. From structures to agency, their works have opened new venues of re-thinking the nature and properties of each, and subsequently the agent-structure debate in the discipline has matured and benefited from such works. For our purposes, both Wendt and Wight have widened the range of tools that an Islamic framework can utilize in developing Islamic based solutions for action international relations. While the works of the two theorists are appreciated, this book will draw more heavily on Wight’s work especially on his book *Agents, Structures, and International Relations*.⁵ In some sections of this book, the framework of Islamic agency that is being developed might even appear as a straightforward application of Wight’s work. I do not necessarily see any problems with this. It happens that Colin Wight offers well-articulated notions of “reality” that although not grounded in Islamic understanding, are not hostile to it, and can even be considered “friendly” and “ready” to be utilized by Islamic theoretical activities. In some cases, Wight’s ontological investigations seem “to be designed” for expressing faith-based agents. Although I doubt that this was his intention, still, this should not stop Muslim IR researchers from acknowledging, appreciating, and making use of such contributions. As will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters critical realist notions will be utilized to express the social dimension of *istikhlāf* which necessarily require sharper social analysis and investigation than the tools of contemporary Islamic thought can provide for. The Islamic bases of this work, however, will be ensured and preserved by an unswerving insistence on Islamic ontological and normative principles. Once we have these in place the discussion will move to the technical side where critical realism and other tools from western social and IR theory can make their contribution.

Introduction

Accordingly chapter two of this work will set the stage as one of *istikhlāf*. The aim will be one of reclaiming the earth as a field of *istikhlāf*, and human agency as vicegerency of Allah. This will be achieved by articulating the constitutive relationships that endow both with their correspondent nature and properties as a superstructure of *istikhlāf*, where each is linked to Allah in a relationship of endowment, while human agency as vicegerency is linked to earth in a relationship of embedment. Once we have this superstructure of *istikhlāf* in place, the relationship of embedment will be further expressed as one of linking roles; the role of *khalīfah* and worldly social roles, and linking endowment and embedment in one coherent account agency underlined by the role of *khalīfah*. This will be achieved by drawing on Roy Bhaskar's notion of social roles as a "point of contact" with social structure which gives human action an access to structural resources/ constraints without scarifying intentionality and freedom of subjectivity. Both will be demonstrated to be essential in operationalizing the role of *khalīfah* under social arrangements. This chapter will also provide an account of structure that reflects the mission of *istikhlāf* (*tawhīd*, *tazkiyah*, *ʿumrān*) where each of these pillars will find a structural layer to draw from (relational, inter-subjective, material). The end product of chapter two will be to present a general Islamic view of agency as "endowed, embodied, intentional action" operationalizable under a context of embedment that features relational, inter-subjective, and material structural conditions of production.

Chapter three will take this general framework to the specific realm of international relations. Acknowledging the ontological distance between the human/individual flavor of the Islamic account of agency and the macro-structure of international relations, the chapter will start by applying the framework at the corporate/collective level by articulating the social role of "member of international society" as a point of contact filled or embodied by Islamic collective action through the institutional platform of the modern state. This exercise will illustrate that the relational, inter-subjective, and material structural conditions of production of contemporary international relations are not in tune with the mission of *istikhlāf* both in theory and practice. Drawing on

Introduction

Christian Rues-Smit's work on the origins of the modern international society,⁶ the chapter will reveal the institutions of which reflect micro-level meanings and assumptions about human nature, needs, and purpose, channeled through, and reproduced by, a hegemonic belief about the moral purpose of the state centered around satisfying those needs.

The chapter will then move on to explore the dynamics through which states, as intermediate social forms reproduce those micro-level meanings at the macro-level of international relations. In this light, it will propose that a more ontologically committed approach is needed concerning the issue of state agency. The focus will be on relocating agency to human agents not the states in order to break up this cycle of reproduction of meanings between the "modern individual" and "modern international society." This will not only reveal the sort of constraints on Islamic action in international relations but will also logically lead to better express the Islamic view of agency as "endowed, embodied, intentional action" defined by the role of *khalifah*, since by this stage we have a human agent who can be assigned moral responsibility before Allah only embedded in the structure of the state, embodying a social role of political leader, and enjoying "real" intentionality, not fictional. The chapter will conclude with a discussion on the difficulty of achieving such an ontological landscape where human agents can be "spotted." Specific issues will be tackled. First, the widespread assumption of "state personification" in western IR theory, and second, the "levels-of-analysis" as supposedly a tool for methodological bracketing what is instead being treated as an ontological map for the discipline.

Chapter four will introduce Colin Wight's reconfigured version of the levels of analysis, which insists on the presence of human action on all levels of analysis including the international level. On this reconfigured version, a map of the path of the "*khalifah*" will be charted where the state level will no longer serve as "home" to ontological barriers to Islamic views and meanings, but rather as a "level of being" and a "point of contact" to the international level. As a context of embedment, the state structures will be articulated as providing a particular set

Introduction

of conditions of productions that enable/constrain the intentional action of Islamic agents. The chapter will conclude with an attempt to sharpen the application of the Islamic view of agency as “endowed, embodied, intentional action” to Islamic agency in international relations by insisting that such view translates into, or mirrors, a structurally constrained/enabled moral action.

The study will conclude with brief discussions on further lines of inquiry that can stem from this work including institutional engineering/design according to the mission of *istikhlāf* (*tawhīd*, *tazkiyah*, *‘umrān*), and the relationship of this to sustaining a moral dimension to Islamic agency in international relations according to the role of *khalīfah*.

Humanity's role as steward is not only a deeply moral one but also a society wide one. Meaning that the idea of *Khalīfah* feeds directly into notions of state, society, and politics; hallmarks of international relations.

This book compares and contrasts Islamic worldviews and Western theoretical perspectives on international relations to suggest that a combination of the two could lead to a mutually beneficial redefinition of contemporary international relations utilizing Western theoretical tools and incorporating an Islamic perspective. Particular focus is given to the Islamic concept of *istikhlāf* as an ontological and normative foundation. The reasoning being that all man-made social arrangements on "earth", as well as international society, should be considered a realm of *istikhlāf*. This allows for return to an eternal and critical first principle, linking all social roles to this principle, which is that man as designated by the Qur'an, is God's *khalīfah* or Vicegerent on earth. It's a statement of great magnitude. This radical approach has required serious engagement with some deeply held assumptions of Western International Relations theory including the subsequent distinction between the causal responsibility of the state on the one hand, and the moral responsibility of statesmen on the other. The result is an ontological terrain in which Islamic actors in international relations are theoretically re-linked to Allah as his Vicegerents, and the structure of modern international society assessed according to the normative foundations of *istikhlāf*.

Meshari Alruwaih is an International Relations PhD candidate at Durham University. He holds a BA in International Relations from Florida International University, and an MA in Research Methods (Politics and International Relations) from Durham University. He is the founder of Islam and International Relations Theory, a web-based forum to share ideas, papers, and research on Islam and International Relations Theory. His Research interests include: Islam and International Relations Theory, Contemporary International Relations Theory, Philosophy of Social Science, Islamic norms and values of international relations, Islamic cooperation and regional integration.



978-1-56564-556-1

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT

Cover image © iStockphoto