SUFISM

A THEORETICAL INTERVENTION IN GLOBAL INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Edited by

DEEPSHIKHA SHAHI

GLOBAL DIALOGUES

Sufism – A Theoretical Intervention in Global International Relations

In an effort to attain a 'Global' character, the contemporary academic discipline of International Relations (IR) increasingly seeks to surpass its Eurocentric limits, thereby opening up pathways to incorporate non-Eurocentric world views. Lately, many of the non-Eurocentric world views have emerged which either engender a 'derivative' discourse of the same Eurocentric IR theories or construct an 'exceptionalist' discourse, which is particularly applicable to the narrow experiential realities of a native time–space zone: as such, they fall short of the ambition to produce a genuinely 'non-derivative' and 'non-exceptionalist' Global IR theory. Against this backdrop, the present book performs a multidisciplinary research to explore how 'Sufism' – as an established non-Western philosophy with a remarkable temporal-spatial spread across the globe – facilitates a creative intervention in the theoretical understanding of Global IR.

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For Dhiraj

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Chapter 1

The Entry of Sufism into Global International Relations: A Move Beyond the State of the Art

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> *Don't be satisfied with stories, how things have gone with others. Unfold your own myth*. (Barks, 2013)

The increasingly global character of today's International Relations (IR) is no longer satisfied with one-sided stories about how things have gone with either the West or the non-West. Rather, the ongoing discussions on Global IR encourage both the West and the non-West to squarely unfold their own myth. In so doing, Global IR seeks to dilute the already problematized Eurocentric temperament of IR knowledge (Wæver, 1998; Hobson, 2004; Jones, 2006; Grovogui, 2006; Kayaoglu, 2010; Schmidt, 2014; Capan, 2017). As the Eurocentric temperament of IR knowledge leads to the misreading of Western history and Western political theory as world history and world political theory, Global IR aspires to do away with this misreading by relocating IR knowledge into a broader non-Western context (Acharya and Buzan, 2019). Lately, the non-Western parts of the globe have contributed several IR theorizations that emanate from their ancient/medieval/modern philosophical heritage: for instance, *Tianxia* ('all-under-heaven') from China (Tingyang, 2006); *Advaita* ('non-duality') from India (Shahi, 2018a); *Basso Ostinato* ('recurrent underlying motif') from Japan (Rösch and Watanabe, 2016); *Dhikr, Takrar, and Tawil* ('repetition, lack of repetition, and interpretation') from Turkey (Balci, 2015); *Ubuntu* ('collective personhood') from Africa (Tieku, 2012); *Gumannyi Sotsializm* ('humane socialism') from Russia (Tsygankov and Tsygankov, 2010); and *Margén de Maniobra* ('search for latitude') from Latin America (Frasson-Quenoz, 2016) among others.[1] However, when an IR theorization (based on a non-Western philosophical heritage) is evoked to bridge the persistent cognitive gaps between the West and the non-West, it often gets trapped into a range of unsettled

contestations: (1) history versus philosophy, (2) chronology versus covariance, (3) language versus concept, (4) culture versus economy, and (5) single versus plural. This study not only foregrounds the disruptive implications of these contestations, but it also demonstrates how Sufism – as a non-Western philosophy with a grand temporal-spatial spread across the globe (Green, 2012) – promises to resolve these contestations in the process of delivering a Global IR theory. As different chapters of this study reflect on the prospects of a 'Sufi Global IR theory', this chapter is divided into three sections. The first section sheds light on the conceptual contours of Global IR: in so doing, it spells out the difference between 'non-Western' and 'post-Western' ways of doing Global IR. The second section articulates how the continuing academic efforts to mainstream Global IR (including both non-Western and post-Western IR) stay fraught with some hurdles: it is these often unrecognized hurdles that undercut a 'West–non-West interface' in theory and practice of global politics. Finally, the third section explains how the alternative philosophical discourses offered by Sufism tackle these hurdles, thereby serving as a viable theoretical-practical component of Global IR.

GLOBAL IR: AN UNAVOIDABLE CROSSING

As per the orthodox account, the idea of an international system based upon the principles of independent sovereign nation-states originated with the Peace of Westphalia (1648) in Europe and was exported to the non-European regions via European colonialism. This Westphalian 'system of states' became academically armoured when a separate department for IR study was established after World War I at the University of Aberystwyth in the United Kingdom (1919).[2] After the end of World War II in 1945, further progress in IR study was made along with the scientific improvement that took place in the United States. Before 1945, Europe sought to handle IR through balance of power (i.e., the idea that the stability of an international system is best ensured through an approximate parity among its major powers); and after 1945, the United States tried to govern IR through multilateralism (i.e., the idea that the legitimacy of an international system is well secured through participation of all nation-states in international institutional frameworks, such as the United Nations and International Monetary Fund): although this post-1945 multilateralism maintained a hypothetical openness towards all nation-states, it remained heavily influenced by the interests and preferences of the United States and its European allies (Acharya, 2017). Not surprisingly, the theory and practice of IR came to possess a strong Eurocentric character. While Eurocentrism – in its varied ideological, historical-contextual, and residual forms (Kuru, 2016) – managed to dominate the Cold

War and post-Cold War phases of global politics (Hobson, 2012), the recent decline in the US hegemony has thrown down fresh challenges. Frasson-Quenoz (2016: 53–54) clarifies:

> The last economic crisis [i.e. 2007 financial crisis] strengthened those who defend the idea that the international system has drifted from unipolarity to 'apolarity'; that is to say, that the current state system is under no leadership. Exhausted and discredited, the American superpower is presented as a wanderer without the capacity nor the will to impose its rule. . . . In the midst of uncertainty – generated by the narratives of the decline of the United States – academics are looking for answers and cerebral stimulus in the heart of the academic *Terra Incognita* that is the 'Global South'. . . . [These] narratives allow for a contextualization of a much more interesting phenomenon: the increasing attention 'non-Western' thinking receives in our discipline.

While the lasting effects of 2007 financial crisis have yet to be felt (Oxenford, 2018), the increasing attention given to non-Western thinking (including non-Western 'ideas' and 'agency') seems to have coincided with the conceptualization of 'Global IR'. Global IR – as an endeavour to incorporate the so far neglected non-Western thinking in IR study – pursues multiple pathways: redefining existing IR theories and methods and building new ones from societies hitherto ignored as sources of IR knowledge; integrating the study of regions and regionalisms into the central concerns of IR; grounding in world history; avoiding ethnocentrism and exceptionalism irrespective of source and form; demonstrating a commitment to pluralistic universalism; and admitting a broader concept of agency with material and ideational elements that include resistance, normative action, and local constructions of global order (Acharya, 2014).

To be sure, the multiple pathways to pursue Global IR seem promising in terms of their determination to transcend the boundaries of Eurocentric IR. Nevertheless, a somewhat erratic labelling of the research works pursuing these pathways as 'non-Western' and/or 'post-Western' has created a substantial ambiguity. To a great extent, this ambiguity emerges from the haziness in the definition of non-Western and post-Western, on the one hand, and the disagreement over the relative relevance of non-Western and post-Western research works for the programmatic content of Global IR, on the other. Amitav Acharya (2015) comments:

> What is the difference between 'non-Western' and 'post-Western'? I cannot speak for 'post-Western', but 'non-Western' IR Theory (NWIRT), when it was first advanced in 2007, called for making critical advances to existing IR theories with the infusion of the ideas, voices and experiences from the Global South (China included). But it did not call for displacing or supplanting existing IR knowledge and theories. Displacement is both impractical and undesirable. I am not sure how far a 'post-Western' IR Theory would seek such displacement.

For Acharya and Buzan (2019: 296), post-Western IR (unlike non-Western IR) puts forward 'a more radical agenda to disavow and displace the existing Western IR'. But for Giorgio Shani (2008), non-Western IR (unlike post-Western IR) runs the risk of producing a mimicry (or say, derivative discourse) of Western IR. While Pinar Bilgin (2008: 5) argues that this non-Western 'mimicry may emerge as a way of doing world politics in a seemingly similar yet unexpectedly different way', Josuke Ikeda (2013) observes that the critical orientation of post-Western IR has an advantage over non-Western IR due to its 'post-colonial' leanings:

> Perhaps one advantage of the latter [post-Western] over the former [non-Western] is its postcolonial quality. The 'provincialization' of Europe, borrowing the word from Dipesh Chakrabarty (and its effective interpretations in IR by Giorgio Shani and Rosa Vasilaki), or of international society, entails the decentralisation of a particular system of knowledge at a deeper level. . . . Nevertheless, there is one possible pitfall even in taking a post-Western approach . . . if the very foundation of post-Western IR, the nexus between the critical in theory and the political in practice, is in fact Western in its cultural ethos, how may we overcome the problem of 'Westfailure'?[3]

Notably, Ikeda's reading of the postcolonial – as a suspected tradition of critical theory and practice that is based on non-Western political experiences, albeit Western cultural ethos – 'bifurcates' the respective politico-experiential realities of the colonizing and colonialized worlds in an incommensurable way. As such, the postcolonial is bound to generate an exceptionalist (not a universalist) discourse, whereas post-Western IR – as a valid element of Global IR – is expected to avoid exceptionalism and promote universalism. Even Edward Said's notion of 'contrapuntal reading' (Chowdhry, 2007; Duvall and Varadarajan, 2007) – that sutures together a 'Global moment of humanism' with a 'postcolonial moment of listening-to-and-hearing the voices of/from alternative loci of enunciation' – ends up blending Western exceptionalism with non-Western exceptionalism: in so doing, it does not assign a tone of parochialism to these exceptionalisms, but detaches these exceptionalisms from tendencies towards universalism.[4] Likewise, the de-colonial thesis – that prompts the subjugated non-Western knowledge-forms to follow the route of 'delinking' from two major Eurocentric macro-narratives, namely, capitalism and communism (Mignolo, 2011) – is supposed to be the 'opposite of assimilation' so as to be able to touch the 'pluriversal instead of universal horizons' (Mignolo, 2012: 90 and 189). In its bid to oppose universal horizons, the de-colonial thesis is inclined to have a preference for 'multiple loosely hanging local exceptionalisms' (not 'multiple closely interconnected global universalisms'), that is, the de-colonial thesis intends

to retain the West-Rest distinctions (read exceptionalisms), whereas Global IR is keen to dissolve them.

If postcolonial/de-colonial methods fail to meet the non-exceptionalist prerequisite of Global IR, then is it possible to imagine other radical post-Western thoughts that neither create a mimicry nor ask for exceptionalism or displacement of the existing Western IR? The answer is 'yes'. Some scholars notice the growth of post-Western IR 'without the emergence of the substantive mimicry and hybrid spaces characteristic of established postcolonial [or de-colonial] relations' (Owen et al., 2018: 279), whereas other scholars recast post-Western IR as a 'monism-inspired' reconciliation research which 'rationally seeks connectedness among (not irrationally imposes oneness upon) the multiple Eurocentric and non-Eurocentric narratives of IR' (Shahi, 2018a: 45). As Global IR makes an effort to accomplish a 'two-way dialogue' across the West–non-West distinction (Yong-Soo, 2019), post-Western IR (as an integral part of Global IR) has turned into an attempt to not only go beyond the mimicry of modern West and critically interrogate the assumptions of Western cultural distinctiveness and superiority (Shani, 2008) but also find an alternative uncultivated intellectual space (Behera, 2010) for a global study of IR that insists on the importance of the systemic, the 'Global'[5] (Hurrell, 2016).

In the light of these discussions, it becomes clear that post-Western IR aspires to cultivate an extra-Eurocentric spirit in IR study. To fulfil this aspiration, post-Western IR comes close to non-Western IR in terms of its 'perceived motive' (i.e., transcendence of Eurocentric IR by way of expanding, not displacing, it), but it remains distant in terms of its 'expected outcome' (i.e., the end result of this transcendence must be a non-derivative discourse that is exterior, not interior, to Eurocentric IR). In this sense, all post-Western works in IR are non-Western in terms of 'input' (as they undeniably borrow from non-Western intellectual resources), but not all non-Western works in IR are post-Western in terms of 'output' (as they may or may not engender a non-derivative discourse that is exterior to Eurocentric IR).

At this stage, it is imperative to announce that the 'Sufi Global IR theory', which this study aims to craft, engenders a non-derivative discourse that is exterior to Eurocentric IR, and therefore, it falls in the post-Western (not non-Western) category. So far as the state of the art in IR study goes, one detects a 'dialectical movement': while the West claims universality for its intellectual projects and actively confines non-Western research works to a provincial/regional applicability, the non-West readily appropriates for itself the 'local' domain in reaction against the West's arrogant claim to universality. Contrary to this trend, the present study presages that a ready and reactionary restriction of non-Western research works to the local domain is problematic: in fact, some non-Western philosophies like Sufism can produce a universalist

discourse to explain the general realities of IR (applicable to the entire globe), without curbing the particularist realities of IR in a given province/region (applicable to the local domain). As such, Sufism moves beyond the state of the art in IR study and proposes that the ongoing dialectical movement does not have to be always about 'universal vs. provincial' (or Western versus non-Western); it could also be about 'universal along with provincial' (or Western along with non-Western). Of course, L. H. M. Ling is right in pointing out that the pristine origins of the labels 'Western' and 'non-Western' have become debatable, given the impact of colonialism yesterday and globalization today (Acharya, 2016). Yet labels matter: even when these labels drop their analytical significance in the world of Global IR, they tend to persist as terms of convenience (Acharya and Buzan, 2019). In any case, Global IR needs a 'West–non-West interface' not only to unveil the intertwined and overlapping histories of humankind (Bilgin, 2016) but also to make sense of the complexities of current crisis-ridden global politics. The next section discusses how Global IR – as it seeks to instil a West–non-West interface in IR study – gets obstructed by some unsettled contestations.

GLOBAL IR: THE UNNECESSARY ROADBLOCKS

The problems that obstruct Global IR (and its need to instil a West–non-West interface) emerge from a few unsettled contestations: (1) history versus philosophy, (2) chronology versus covariance, (3) language versus concept, (4) culture versus economy, and (5) single versus plural.[6] Let us examine the disruptive implications of each of these contestations before starting to analyse how Sufism plans to overcome them.

History versus Philosophy

Over the past two decades, the non-Western parts of the globe have come up with a number of IR theories/concepts that emanate from their ancient/medieval/modern philosophical heritage. However, when these non-Western IR theories/concepts are applied to grasp the current realities of IR, their capabilities are more often than not judged on grounds of their 'historical limits', that is, a philosophical heritage is considered fertile only to the extent that it succeeds within the historical boundaries of its origin. As such, history is mobilized as an instrument to truncate philosophy. But when history is mobilized as an instrument to truncate philosophy, it is almost forgotten that several non-Western IR theories/concepts decidedly grant an upper hand to 'philosophy' (not 'history'): for instance, Tingyang's account of the actual historical record may be open to question, but he admits that he is a

philosopher (not a historian) when he uses the Chinese concept of 'Tianxia' (all-under-heaven) for IR study (Feng, 2010). Likewise, Shahi (2018a) philosophically restores the Indian concept of 'Advaita' (non-duality) by extracting its 'generalized abstractions' that grant continuity to its numerous historically specific and religiously irreconcilable hermeneutics: in addition, she proclaims that the denigrated status of multiple non-Eurocentric (and even some Eurocentric) world views is an outcome of the shifting political power configurations in IR, which, in turn, depend upon historically determined conditions in the long run, and not on the inner properties of the philosophical traditions *per se*. After all, one needs to realize that the historical readings of a philosophy have their own limits: supposedly, if a philosophy does not work at a particular historical point, it does not mean that it would not work ever and, if a philosophy works at a particular historical point, it does not mean that it would work forever. For sure, the dominant theories of Eurocentric IR – namely, realism, liberalism and constructivism – have been commonly stumped by 'change' (Snyder, 2004), thereby indicating that none of these philosophical frameworks could work forever.[7] So, whenever 'History vs. Philosophy' dispute crops up to distort the possibilities of an effective West–non-West interface in IR study, the question that one needs to instantly ask is this: why should we accept 'history' (or records of the past) as a natural limit to human future potential?

Chronology versus Covariance

Because 'history' is frequently used as a lens to look over the present, it inadvertently gives birth to another perplexity – that is, the perplexity related to 'chronological battle' over who came first in (re)producing a particular idea/concept/method/theory. An instance of this chronological battle can be traced in the contestations over the actual 'pioneer of realpolitik' in IR: since the realpolitik of Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* (second to fourth century CE) appeared much before the realpolitik of Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1532), it is deemed suitable to label Machiavelli as 'Italian or Mediterranean Kautilya', not Kautilya as 'Indian Machiavelli' (de Souza, 2011; Acharya, 2014); in a similar vein, it is stressed that Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* (second to fourth century CE), not Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), must be acknowledged as the 'true founder of economics' (Sihag, 2014). But such a chronological battle is weak in its ability to infuse a West–non-West interface in IR study: though it revives the status of Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* as a compelling non-Western tool to attack the Eurocentric roots of IR, it ends up promoting a narrow re-reading of the extraordinary 'eclectic philosophical foundation' of this classical text which neatly goes beyond Machiavelli's *The Prince* (Shahi, 2018b). Clearly, such a chronological battle exemplifies how 'competition

produces a tendency toward sameness of the competitors' (Pieczara, 2010).[8] Furthermore, it occasionally manufactures a misleading impression that a particular idea/concept/method/theory has to always historically travel from one place to another before showing up at both the places. Therefore, whenever this sort of chronological battle circumscribes a West–non-West interface in IR study, one must rethink through Helmuth Plessner's concept of 'covariance': the concept of covariance presupposes that the intrinsically (or genetically) related ideas can be produced in historically and culturally distant spaces (Liebig, 2014: 29). As a result, anybody positioned at any temporal-spatial point can concentrate and capture the freely floating ideas which are provincially neither Western nor non-Western. Thus, instead of 'provincializing' (which is a stereotypical postcolonial/de-colonial strategy), one can emphatically allocate a higher priority to the task of 'non-provincializing' a particular idea/concept/method/theory.

Language versus Concept

As of now, the scheme of 'provincializing' has been widely seen as a remedy to the problem of Eurocentrism in IR. However, the ideas/concepts/methods/theories that flow from the so-called 'non-Western provinces' are many a time accepted merely as 'linguistic', not 'conceptual', additions to the already-existing body of Eurocentric IR knowledge. That is, the increasing influx of Chinese, Indian, African, or Arabic linguistic terminologies is hailed as a sufficient proof of the enhanced 'globality' of IR; it is barely checked if this enhanced globality (resulting from the influx of foreign terminologies) can provide novel 'concepts' to tackle the challenges of contemporary global politics. In a way, it is believed that the existing Eurocentric IR knowledge 'knows it all'; what non-Eurocentric IR knowledge could do is to inclusively participate in 'politics of knowledge' which, in turn, would lead to the arousal of some non-Western linguistic terminologies to offer a mimicry or derivative discourse (i.e., 'conceptual duplication') of the same Eurocentric IR knowledge, thereby fabricating nothing more than 'analogies'. Though the Western inquisitiveness about the non-Western linguistic additions (or 'analogies') is appreciable (Messner, 2017), an efficient West–non-West interface in IR study necessitates a different kind of intellectual temperament: such an intellectual temperament not only supposes that the same concept can possess different meanings in different milieus (Rösch and Watanabe, 2016) but also confesses that there are different concepts (in both Western and non-Western traditions) that currently remain denigrated and, therefore, prohibited from the mainstream Eurocentric IR knowledge (Shahi and Ascione, 2016). The entry of such prohibited non-Western vocabulary into IR knowledge is not

essentially about 'linguistics'; it could also be about 'concepts': even if these non-Western concepts currently remain at the outskirts of formal IR knowledge, they, nonetheless, recurrently affect the mindset of varied actors who keenly influence the realities of today's global politics.

Culture versus Economy

Parallel to the trend of restricting non-Western IR knowledge to 'language' (not 'concept'), there is an observable predisposition to compartmentalize non-Western IR knowledge as 'cultural' (or spiritual), not 'economic' (or material). Arlene B. Tickner (2003: 322) notes:

> [The] non-Western experiences with nationalism have been premised upon opposition and difference to imported models. However, Partha Chatterjee [1986] explains that anti-colonial nationalism in the African and Asian contexts is also characterised by a fundamental contradiction entailing imitation and rejection vis-à-vis modernity and tradition. At the same time that the bearer of modernity, the colonial power, is to be rejected, it is also to be imitated by way of its 'universal' methods; similarly, traditional practices considered to pose an obstacle to progress are rejected, while they are also revered as the bearers of national identity. In consequence, such [non-Western] experiences . . . are characterised by a dual process consisting of: (1) replication and emulation of those material practices (law, statecraft, economy, etc.) imposed by the coloniser, in order to erase difference; and (2) careful guarding of spiritual practices, where cultural identity resides, in order to preserve cultural distinctiveness.

This formulaic postcolonial/de-colonial technique of putting the 'cultural/spiritual' and 'economic/material' realities in separate boxes (which, in turn, means stopping the non-Western sociopolitical experiences from uniformly intervening in both the boxes) is highly detrimental to a functional West–non-West interface in IR study,[9] even more so in the context of the current crisis-ridden global politics which witnesses both the 'culturalization of the economic' and 'economization of the culture' (Biebuyck and Meltzer, 2010). As Global IR (especially after 2007 financial crisis) confronts the 'economy as a cultural system' (Dufresne and Sacchetti, 2012), the economic undertones of non-Western cultural voices must be readily affirmed and proactively inserted in Global IR.

Single versus Plural

While Global IR listens to divergent Western and non-Western voices with an objective to resolve the many political-economic-cultural crises that pervade

today's neoliberal world order, it inescapably grapples with a core unresolved tension: namely, the tension between 'single' (read universal) and 'plural' (read particular). Kratochwil (1998: 215) remarks:

> [Q]uite different from the philosophical argument that we are part of just another episode of the [single] relentless historical process leading to ever more inclusive forms of political organization, the spread of universalism [by Eurocentric IR] is strongly counteracted by the equally strong assertion of particularities [or non-assimilative pluralities by non-Eurocentric postcolonial and de-colonial IR]. Precisely because the packed imagery of the visionary global culture is either trivial or shallow.

This 'single vs. plural'/'universal vs. particular' tension – that callously thwarts the acceleration of Global IR – also aggravates the squabble between 'Eurocentric IR' and 'non-Eurocentric post-colonial/de-colonial IR'. Shahi (2018a: 110–111) simplifies:

> In an effort to challenge the universalist claims of Eurocentric IR, the non-Eurocentric post-colonial and de-colonial IR present a holist view of reality: a holist view that emphasizes upon combining the 'missing particularist narratives of/from the non-Western parts' with the 'provincialized particularist narratives of/from the Western parts' for seizing the whole/holist reality of IR. However, this holist view of reality presented by post-colonial and de-colonial IR recommends the same Eurocentric dualism: while Eurocentric IR maintains the separation between the West and the Rest, the non-Eurocentric post-colonial and de-colonial IR reverse this knowledge-situation and retain the separation between the Rest and the West.

While the West flaunts the universal credentials of its knowledge claims, the non-West is no less in showing off the provincial/local credentials of its knowledge claims.[10] But then, as mentioned earlier, there are a few non-Western philosophies, like Sufism, that not only generate a 'universalist' world view but also preserve the 'particularist' elements of the realities of a given province/locality. Thus, whenever 'single vs. plural' (or universal versus particular) tension disrupts the much-sought West–non-West interface in IR study, it is crucial to make the following twofold assertion: (1) the West does not exhaust the universalist explanations/descriptions of IR; the non-West does (and can) add to the universalist explanations of IR; and (2) the universalist explanation of Global IR must not always subscribe to 'single vs. plural' tension;[11] it could, rather, outdo this tension by implanting a spirit that supports 'single along with plural'. The next section explores how Sufism is strategically well equipped to exceed the barriers that impede the expansion of Global IR.

THE SUFI ROUTE TO GLOBAL IR: A POSSIBLE WAY FORWARD

How does Sufism creatively respond to the unsettled contestations that hamper the expansion of Global IR? To begin with, Sufism considers 'history' and 'philosophy' as two neighbours who repetitively (re)visit each other to understand each other (Rosenthal, 1988). And this endeavour to understand encompasses the tripartite scheme of *'aql* (rational along with reflective tradition), *naql* (religious tradition), and *kashf* (direct intuitive knowledge) (Chittick, 2010). Collectively, Sufi history and Sufi philosophy (as a rich reservoir of *'aql*, *naql*, and *kashf*) construct an 'explanatory paradigm'. Spelling out the working of this explanatory paradigm, Alexander Knysh (2002: 170–172) informs:

> [We assume that] the essence of Sufism is immutable across time and space. . . . What we forget is that the notion of 'classical' or 'authentic' Sufism is but a carefully assembled product of a long tradition of systematization and standardization at the hands of its authoritative exponents who were firmly grounded in their societies and epochs. What they recognized as belonging to 'Sufism' serves us as a litmus test in determining whether a historical or contemporary phenomenon can be attributed to this category. . . . [As] we, as observers, hold different notions of what Sufism should or should not be (which are determined by our competence, academic specialization, breadth of intellectual and cultural background, different life experiences and personal convictions and predilections), we shall probably never fully agree on the issue. This is not to say that some sort of an academic consensus on the issue cannot be reached, since the parameters that help us to attribute a certain religious or social phenomenon to the Sufi tradition were set for us by earlier Sufi thinkers. . . . If we have read or heard a more-or-less same body of these parameter-setting . . . texts . . . oral traditions, we shall probably arrive at roughly the same notion of Sufism. The trick is not to absolutize one's own [philosophical] concept of Sufism and not to try to force historical evidence into its procrustian bed.

Logically, a Sufi study neither inhibits history (as a dynamic temporal-spatial structure that moulds political-economic-cultural realities) nor represses philosophy (as a static critical benchmark that precipitates political-economic-cultural realities). In the 'dialetheic' or 'contradictory' nature of a Sufi study (Zolghadr, 2018), the history (as chronological teleology) of one idea can be interrupted with its many expressions (or covariants). While the many expressions of one idea may display variations in language, the variations in language may not necessarily imply variations in the experience itself. In effect, Sufi language 'may appear to be metaphorical while in fact being descriptive of [the same] experience [that occurs] in the intermediate realm . . . between the world of

pure spirit and the world of bodies . . . or it may be truly metaphorical since language using imagery is considered to be a better indicator of the nature of reality than abstract rational thought' (Sands, 2006: 2). Also Sufi language of metaphor may be used as a configuration to enable someone who is in the abstract world ('one concealed world') to cross over in our world ('many apparent worlds') (Adonis, 2016). Plainly, Sufi language 'means' on various levels (Lucas, 2017): the more it 'means' on various levels, the more it adds to the 'conceptual' pool of knowledge. And the meanings and concepts supplied by Sufi language can be utilized to interpret not only 'cultural difference' but also 'cultural economy of difference' between many apparent worlds (LeBlanc, 2013): for instance, it may be argued that a Sufi performance may convey a cultural-religious faith, even if its incitement is based on social and economic ambitions (Kirkegaard, 2012). Notwithstanding the 'variations in language' or 'cultural economy of difference', Sufism reconciles pluralism with singularism. Articulating how Sufism reconciles pluralism with singularism, Hazrat Inayat Khan (2011: 12–13) elaborates:

> Just as, in a limited form, a nation or a community is the sum of many personalities, just as nature manifested in numerous names and forms is still called nature, singular not plural, just as the individual combines within himself [or herself] the different parts of his[or her] body, arms, limbs, eyes, ears, and is possessed of different qualities yet is one person, so the sum total of all personalities is called God [or 'one single source of reality' who] is the possessor of all the visible and invisible attributes. . . . It may be said that the personality of a man is quite comprehensible, since his[or her] actions exhibit him[or her] as a single individual, whereas God's personality has no clear identification of its own. The answer is, that variety covers unity [or plurality covers singularity]. 'Hidden things are manifested by their opposites, but God [or 'one single source of reality'] . . . has no opposite in the range of creation whereby it may be manifested to view' (*Jelal-ud-din Rumi*). . . . [B]y studying nature, [one] enters into the unity through variety [or one enters into singularity through plurality].

The myriad Sufi postures on history, philosophy, chronology, covariance, language, concept, culture, economy, singularity, and plurality are assembled by this study as it steadily prepares a blueprint of 'Sufi Global IR theory'. In part 1, the epistemological-ontological-methodological threads of Sufi philosophy – as exposed in the works of Al-Ghazālī, Ibn al-Arabī, and Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī – are interlocked to design a preliminary framework of Sufi Global IR theory. Though the study is theoretically oriented, it admits that no IR theory can make legitimate claims about the political-economic-cultural realities of global politics until and unless it is measured against historical evidence. Therefore, part 2 proceeds to critically appraise the tensions between philosophical and historical dimensions of

Sufism: it shows how the Sufi philosophical-textual module of 'oneness of being' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) is differently activated in the historical context of Syria and Turkey; it also diagnoses the historical context of Sudan to disclose that the textual implications of 'Sufi-philosophy' move further than the contextual confines of 'Sufi-history' – that is, the success or failure of Sufism in a particular historical context (e.g., in bridging identitarian gaps along the lines of 'oneness of being') is not correlated to the universalist philosophical relevance (or transcendentality) of Sufi texts. After analysing the philosophical and historical trajectories of Sufism in non-Western parts of the globe (i.e., parts of Asia and Africa), part 3 goes on to sketch the past and present manifestations of Sufi thoughts in Western parts of the globe: precisely, the United States and Europe. Finally, part 4 brings together the findings of the entire course of study; in the light of these findings, it revisits the preliminary framework of Sufi Global IR theory and further develops this framework to give it a full-fledged shape.

The study walks upon that untrodden road of Sufism which leads to the destination of a 'Global IR theory'. Since various chapters in parts 1 to 4 have been authored by a team of researchers coming from miscellaneous disciplines (primarily, IR, Political Science, Religious Studies, Language and Literature, Anthropology, Journalism, and Media Studies), the methodological foundation of the study is unequivocally 'multidisciplinary'. In line with the multidisciplinary methodology, the study adjoins 'complementary contributions' from a broad range of expertise towards the service of a common goal (Fiore and Salas, 2007) – that is, the goal of formulating a 'Sufi Global IR theory'. Denoting the theoretical value of a multidisciplinary research, Cuevas et al. (2012: 63) states:

> Multidisciplinary research can be beneficial from a theoretical perspective. Unexpected yet fascinating results and greater theoretical insights can emerge when researchers are empathetic to and knowledgeable of the interests and objectives of other stakeholders. Thus, rather than viewing requirements of other team members as potential constraints, it is worthwhile to leverage these different perspectives to achieve greater theoretically significant outcomes arising from the synergistic activities of multidisciplinary research.

Against the familiar trend of 'specialization' which results in the production of disjunct bodies of knowledge (e.g. 'area-studies' or 'literary-analyses') – wherein researchers across disciplines treat their efforts as disconnected from other scholarly debates and overlook the possibilities of interlinkages among their findings that can tie various disjunct bodies of knowledge together – the multidisciplinary stance of this study promises to encourage 'cross-fertilization' of diverse approaches (Smith and Narayan, 2011). As a result, the study

adopts an extra-scientific technique directed towards not only critically locating and solving problems, but also imagining alternative possibilities. And in imagining alternative possibilities – for the discipline of IR in particular and social sciences in general – this extra-scientific technique zealously depends upon not only the rational faculty of mind but also the emotional faculty of heart. As the rational faculty of mind is skilled in discerning the plurality of human experiences, the emotional faculty of heart is skilled in spotting singularity across the plurality of human experiences. Thus, both mind- and heart-based human experiences need to be dynamically asserted and accommodated. Beyond doubt, this study embraces all its nuances with a unanimous conviction that it is the uniting (not disuniting) of rationalism and emotionalism that portrays the pinnacle of human possibilities in local or global, Western or non-Western political life.

NOTES

1. It is argued that the Latin American scholarship in IR – which remains inspired by the internationalist perspective of Andres Bello – cannot be neatly accommodated within either accounts of the expansion of international society or revisionist post-colonial thought: as such, it is neither fully 'Western' nor 'non-Western' (Fawcett, 2012).

2. Carvalho, Hobson, and Leira (2011) offer a critical commentary on the myths of '1648' (that the Peace of Westphalia gave birth to the sovereign political units that we now take for granted) and '1919' (that IR was born out of the calamities of World War I): they relate these myths with the 'Aberystwyth Papers' published in 1972.

3. Ikeda's observations are 'essentialist' in at least three ways: (1) the post-Western is necessarily interpreted as postcolonial; (2) the post-Western is unavoidably linked with the ethos of critical theory and practice; and (3) the ethos of critical theory and practice is compulsorily construed as Western. Surely, each of these observations is independently questionable.

4. According to Cocks (2000), Edward Said essentially owns an 'anti-universalizing humanist' philosophical stance.

5. Even Eurocentric IR admits that the discipline – which largely focused upon the study of states and the effects of anarchy on their foreign policies – has now begun moving away from the study of 'international relations' and towards the study of 'global society' (Goodin, Barnett, and Sikkink, 2011).

6. These unsettled contestations were firstly outlined in my paper titled 'Foregrounding the Complexities of a "Dialogic" Approach to Global IR', presented at the Fourth All Azimuth Workshop on *Dialogue in Core-Periphery IR* held in Istanbul, Turkey on 17 May, 2019.

7. Jack Snyder (2004: 61) writes: 'Realists failed to predict the end of the Cold War, for example. Even after it happened, they tended to assume that the new system would become multipolar ("back to the future", as the scholar John J. Mearsheimer

put it). Likewise, the liberal theory of democratic peace is stronger on what happens after states become democratic than in predicting the timing of democratic transitions, let alone prescribing how to make transitions happen peacefully. Constructivists are good at describing changes in norms and ideas, but they are weak on the material and institutional circumstances necessary to support the emergence of consensus about new values and ideas. With such uncertain guidance from the theoretical realm, it is no wonder that policymakers, activists, and public commentators fall prey to simplistic or wishful thinking about how to effect change'.

8. K. Pieczara (2010: 5–6) explains: 'Some resemblances of [West–non-West] dialogue are based upon pressures produced by competition, which through selection lead to sameness. Like in Waltz, competition produces a tendency toward sameness of the competitors . . . . It is because of competition, spurring imitation, and ultimately leading to sameness that makes for – in the words of Thomas Biersteker [2009] – 'intellectual reproduction' in the field. . . . Although [many] non-Western scholars see the reality of their regions differently, they [more often than not] strive to squeeze their observations into existing IR frameworks'.

9. In contrast to the postcolonial compartmentalization of 'materialism/economy' and 'spiritualism/culture', Ghanshyam Shah (2013) performs a re-reading of Mahatma Gandhi's famous work *Hind Swaraj* (originally published in 1909) to state how the elements of both spiritualism and materialism are embedded in the philosophies of not only the West, but also the non-West (including India).

10. In this context, it is relevant to recall the role of International Studies Association which, in its bid to consolidate 'global dialogues' in IR, often invites and arranges the voices from the non-West (i.e. 'local' domains) by way of forming 'all women' or 'all young' or 'all non-white' discursive panels: instead of boxing the non-Western voices along particular gender, age, or racial grounds, it would be more productive if these voices are aligned on grounds of their universally applicable conceptual contents and merits.

11. Eurocentric IR subscribes to 'universal vs. particular' tension because its dualist frameworks presume that there cannot be a 'non-perspectival perspective' (Shapcott, 2001). For instance, Young (1990: 104) argues: 'It is impossible to adopt an unsituated moral point of view. And if a point is situated, then it cannot be universal . . . hence, [all universal accounts of realities provide] monological [not dialogical] accounts of human agency'. By contrast, the monist philosophical outlook of Sufism cannot be strictly tied down to any specific spatio-temporal locations/centres of situated knowledge-forms. For a detailed discussion on this issue, see Shahi (2018c).

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Part 1

SUFISM AND GLOBAL INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Chapter 2

Al-Ghazālī, Ibn al-Arabī, and Global International Relations: A Sufi Re-Reading of Knowledge-Power Nexus

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> *If not for us, the next world would never become differentiated from this world*. (Ibn al-Arabī, 1980)

In his series of lectures delivered at Vienna in 1935 – later compiled as *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1970) – Edmund Husserl created a hierarchical differentiation between the two worlds: namely, European civilization and its Oriental counterparts. According to Husserl, European humanity contains within itself an absolute idea as it is born out of 'reason', whereas Oriental civilizations like China and India are merely an 'empirical anthropological type'. Essentially, Husserl finds a fundamental opposition between European and Oriental philosophical orientations: the 'practical attitude' underlying all Oriental (non-Western) intellectual traditions falls short of a detailed concern with the particular totalities of the world; by contrast, Greek-European science (or universally speaking, philosophy) has a mission to produce 'theoretical knowledge'.[1] Clearly, Husserl does not ascribe the production of theoretical knowledge to non-Western societies simply because their thinking appears as mythical-practical. And this thought continues to survive as a kind of unnamed norm for doing social sciences in today's academic corridors: noticeably, Western thinkers of previous centuries such as Kant, Marx, and Weber remain alive in theory-based studies without being historicized or put in a European context, whereas non-Western thinkers like Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabī remain truly dead as potential sources of theoretical knowledge; their works are evoked only for historical research (Chakrabarty, 2008). Nevertheless, even a cursory look at Western and non-Western philosophical texts exposes that neither Greek-European science is free from mythical-practical nor Oriental philosophy fails to develop theoretical knowledge. Despite this fact, the hegemonic

ways of doing social sciences persist: even when non-Western philosophical texts find resonance with the so-called Greek-European science, they are reduced to a set of secondary correlative categories for comprehending Western theoretical arguments or a reservoir of back-up referential data for validating Western thoughts (Pasha, 2011).[2] Against Husserl and the ambient air of predominant Western International Relations (IR) theory, this chapter arouses the medieval Islamic Sufi philosophy of Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabī to embark upon a 'travel to intellectual terrains outside of the ideal West' (Shilliam, 2011: 24): as such, the chapter undermines the security of an epistemological cartography which assigns the task of theoretical knowledge production to one idealized geo-cultural site – that is, the West.[3] The chapter aims to demonstrate that the medieval Islamic Sufi philosophy – as expressed in the works of Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabī – is astonishingly rich in terms of its ability to produce theoretical knowledge.[4] Since the production of theoretical knowledge and its relation to power constitute the core themes of Global IR,[5] this chapter shows how the medieval Islamic Sufi philosophy could be instrumental in re-reading the 'knowledge-power nexus' in contemporary global politics.

Unlike Islamic philosophy dominated by the Muslim philosopher Avicenna (Ibn Sina), the deep interest of medieval Islamic Sufi philosophers in knowledge-power nexus makes them strikingly distinctive: while Al-Ghazālī argues that knowledge is not fixed in the nature of things but an interpretation imposed on things, Ibn al-Arabī further asserts how knowledge (as a fixed idea about something) is produced in/for power-relations. Against the theory of causation, these Sufi thinkers aim to reveal that nothing has a fixed essence that can be found and therefore controlled. Their apparent essence, namely fixed knowledge about them, is something fabricated in a piecemeal way by somebody for some purposes. Therefore, for Sufi thinkers, any form of knowledge tells something about power-relations at the time it emerged and remained dominant, not about the subjects regarding which it speaks. These Sufi thinkers go further and claim that it is impossible to produce true knowledge simply because there are no sovereign human beings who can produce it. Even when human beings set themselves free from all power-relations (which is the highest level of Sufism), they are only capable of reaching at the level of bewilderment about created things. This basic assumption about the nature of knowledge makes the Sufi concepts, tools, and hypotheses highly fruitful for the study of knowledge-power nexus. This chapter designs a Sufi approach for the innovative study of knowledge-power nexus in Global IR. The chapter is organized in the following way: first, it discusses the origins of the idea of knowledge as interpretation in medieval Islamic philosophy; second, it focuses upon the works of Al-Ghazālī who provides one of the most sophisticated explanations of knowledge as interpretation by offering

a convincing criticism of the theory of causation; third, it introduces Ibn al-Arabī's perception of cosmos where unrepeatability is the rule, repetition makes knowledge possible, and repetition of knowledge is arbitrary; and finally, it offers an overview of how these Sufi understandings of knowledge as interpretation and/or repetition practically shape the relations between jurists (interpreters) and kings (governors) in the realm of local and global politics.

CAUSATION VERSUS INTERPRETATION: THE GREAT DEBATE

The conflict between divine predestination (*al-qadar*) and human freewill was the main source of philosophical debate among medieval Islamic thinkers. According to the Mut'azilite School, if God predetermined all future events, human freewill would be void, and thus punishment of human beings for their actions would be simply unjust. Humans are not the ones who decide their actions freely if God has a foreknowledge of their actions. Consequently, the Mut'azilite School and its followers denied a fully determined future, namely divine foreknowledge. However, denying predestination, God's full knowledge about the future existence of a certain event, is against divine omniscience. The Ash'arite School, therefore, accepts God's freedom in all matters, including knowledge about future events. While the Mut'azilite School prioritized human freewill, the Ash'arite School aimed to safeguard God's omnipotence.

These two schools of thought in medieval Islamic philosophy produced two radically different theories of knowledge. For the Mut'azilite School, and Avicenna in particular, God created the world and is not allowed to change its rules. Therefore trust in God, the belief that God will not change the rules of the world, is a major precondition for producing general statements about reality or temporal truths. The fixed nature of things (based upon God's fixed rules of the world) makes causation possible. It is through causation that temporal truths can be scientifically produced. For the Ash'arite School, on the other hand, viewing things as the carrier of possibilities that are bound to be actualized in the future restricts the way these things may exist in the future. These restrictions, therefore, unduly limit God's omnipotence (Griffel, 2009). The notion of God's complete control over the entire creation leads to occasionalism, granting God control over every single element of creation at every point in time.

As one of the most elegant defenders of occasionalism, Al-Ghazālī says: 'All temporal events, their substance and accidents . . . come about through the power of God. He alone holds the sole prerogative of creating them. No

created thing comes about through another [created thing]' (Marmura, 1994: 280); as such, no created 'effect' comes about through a created 'cause'. For the Ash'arite School, and Al-Ghazālī in particular, God creates every single element without casual necessity. In other words, there is no fixed nature of things which makes causation possible and, thus, God's omnipotence impossible. This ontological difference between the Mut'azilites and the Ash'arites about creation leads the latter to question the status of temporal truth/knowledge produced through fixed nature of things. However, it is worth noting that the Ash'arites do not entirely deny causal relations between things. Rather, they argue that the causal relations between things are nothing but interpretations imposed upon things by human beings. If there is no such thing as truth/knowledge fixed in things by nature, divorced from scientists' position in time and space, then the truth/knowledge in hand should be called into question. When knowledge is understood as an end-product to be utilized to create things that it refers to, rather than something found in things, it is possible to look at its origin, its conditions of emergence, and its relations with the existing power-relations. To put it differently, the truth/knowledge as interpretation needs to be examined as temporal ideational motivation and, therefore, it is important to lay bare the scientists'/scholars' concealed motivation.[6] The revolutionary Ash'arite critique of the Mut'azilite causation theory finds a cogent articulation in Al-Ghazālī's thought: the idea of calling truth/knowledge as interpretation is revolutionary because it opens the door for a critical study of knowledge-power nexus.

AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S CHALLENGE TO CAUSATION: KNOWLEDGE AS 'INTERPRETATION'

To explain how future events are known by the souls of heavenly bodies, Avicenna appeals to causation: if human beings knew all the causes, what will happen is known. To use the words of Avicenna, 'If any man could know all events and phenomena of earth and heaven and understand their nature, he would know with certainty how all that is to come in the future will come to be' (Goodman, 1992: 86). Echoing Avicenna's thought, Al-Ghazālī (2000: 155) offers the summary of a stereotypical philosophers' argument about prediction: 'If we know the more frequent and the greater number of [the causes], we would acquire a clear, [well-founded] opinion [regarding the effects'] occurrence'. But going against Avicenna and other stereotypical philosophers' argument, Al-Ghazālī sees a major problem in prediction: if there is no contingency in the future, it is clear that such an understanding of causation through which prediction becomes possible is against the possibility of miracles. In order to affirm miracles, and to prove that God has power

over all things, Al-Ghazālī 'upholds the contingency of the world against the necessitarianism of Avicenna' (Griffel, 2009: 173).

Al-Ghazālī provides a simple example to explain how causation comes from our interpretation and not from a series of observation. When we see that an individual is inside the house, we deny that he or she is outside the house because it is impossible to imagine him or her at a place other than the house at the same time as he or she is in the house. The denial of his or her being elsewhere other than the house does not come from a direct observation of the fact that we cannot find him or her elsewhere. Rather, it comes from our judgement that a person cannot be at the same time inside the house and elsewhere. This is so because, for Al-Ghazālī (2000: 170), 'the continuous habit of [re]occurrence [of things], one time after another, fixes unshakably in our minds the belief in their occurrence according to past habit'. Since we have not yet observed such a case wherein an individual is at two different places at the same time, we can infer from an individual's being in the house that he or she is not elsewhere. Then, our knowledge about this individual is situated upon our judgement, not upon our observation of the whole universe.

Observation, as per Al-Ghazālī (2000: 159), shows no necessary casual connection: without observing the whole universe, which is an impossible task for one created being at one point in time, the relation between the world and our knowledge about it is not necessarily connected. Our knowledge is generated by our judgements not by things in the outside world. Put differently, Al-Ghazālī turns the basic rule of realist epistemology inside out: events in the world are not the cause of our knowledge about them; it is rather our judgement that brings events and knowledge about them together. This idea is a radical challenge to realist epistemology defended by Avicenna and his followers in the most straightforward way (Griffel, 2009: 178). Unlike realist epistemology assuming conformity of humanly created knowledge to the nature of real things, Al-Ghazālī argues that what we habitually regard as sequence of cause and effect is in reality concomitant events arranged by the divine will.

If the disruption of the habitual course of nature is possible either through creation of the effects without causes or through creation of causes on another pattern that is not customary, if the habitual course of nature is not a necessary constant, then how are we to know anything about the world? At this point where his opponents raise the strongest objection, Al-Ghazālī (2000: 196) makes a concession and says: when one 'does not reduce [causes] to the habitual courses [of nature], one cannot build on them knowledge which is reliable'. This concession – whereby reliable knowledge is possible only when one reduces causes to the habitual courses of nature – makes Griffel reject the idea of calling Al-Ghazālī a defender of a relativist view of human knowledge.[7] However, regardless of his potent criticism of causation, Al-Ghazālī still maintains that the truth is the correspondence of human

knowledge with the outside reality. At this point where Al-Ghazālī stops pushing the limits any further, Ibn al-Arabī takes the task of building a radical alternative to the theory of causation.

Ibn al-Arabī not only provides a complex explanation of why knowledge is arbitrary but also directs our attention toward the relations between knowledge and power. According to Ibn al-Arabī (Chittick, 1989: 202), 'Not a single ugly thing [related to power] happens without the legal pronouncement [knowledge-form] of a jurist'. That is, there is no king (or possessor of worldly authority) without the correlative production of knowledge by the jurists (interpreters). Since the jurists seek high degrees with the king, it is the 'relations' between the jurists and the king that produce knowledge. This means knowledge (as a fixed idea about something) is impossible outside of power-relations; rather, knowledge develops only where power-relations are exercised.[8] After Al-Ghazālī does his job by showing how knowledge (as interpretations imposed by human beings upon things) is not something waiting to be discovered in things, Ibn al-Arabī attempts to explain why, then, do we keep producing knowledge. In other words, Ibn al-Arabī asks a completely new question: if knowledge is mere interpretation (and not a possible truth), then why do we produce (and consume) it?

IBN AL-ARABĪ'S COSMOS: THE ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF 'UNREPEATABILITY'[9]

To understand Ibn al-Arabī's view on knowledge-power nexus, it is important to comprehend his ontological assumptions about the cosmos (*alam*) and its creator, God, *Allah*. The cosmos is the manifestations of the Divine Presence because everything that exists in this cosmos manifests something from *Allah*, who prefers to reveal Himself in this way. As Chittick (1989: 9) says, for Ibn al-Arabī, the cosmos is not the He; rather it just manifests the He. But then, the cosmos (or universe) is not for the manifestations of He himself; it is also the effects and properties of *Allah*'s divine names. Ibn al-Arabī (2016, Vol. 13: 35) informs: 'In respect [to] Himself, He is independent of the worlds, but in respect [to] His most beautiful names, [they] demand the cosmos because of the possibility (*imkan*) . . . [of] their effects to become manifest within it'. In other words, the cosmos is *Allah*'s locus of self-disclosure, within which the properties of His names become manifest. Although this understanding implies that *Allah* can be known through the observation of the cosmos, Ibn al-Arabī conspicuously rejects this implication. What Ibn al-Arabī (2016, Vol. 11: 289) says on this point is worth quoting at some length:

> [*Allah*] brought the cosmos into existence only so that the cosmos might come to know Him. But the cosmos is temporally originated, so nothing subsists within

> it that is not temporally originated. Knowledge subsists within the cosmos either through [*Allah's*] giving knowledge (*ta'rif*), or through the faculty which He created within [the cosmos] through which knowledge is reached, though only in a certain aspect.

Ibn al-Arabī rejects any knowledge about *Allah* reaching through reason because the only way to know Him is through knowledge received from Him. Since *Allah* is not similar to anything in the cosmos, anything in the cosmos is also not similar to Him. And reason (as a created thing that follows the authority of another created thing in the cosmos) has nothing to know of *Allah*. In other words, the cosmos manifests Him but only to the extent of what He says about Himself (Chittick, 1989: 81 and 166).

Ibn al-Arabī's ontological assumption about why the cosmos does exist leads him to make an additional assertion that the repetition of things within the cosmos is impossible: 'No attribute and no state in the cosmos remains for two moments, nor does any form become manifest twice' (Chittick, 1989: 99). This is the case because *Allah* never discloses Himself in a single form twice nor does He create similarity in two individuals because of the Divine Vastness (*al-tawassu' al-ilahi*), that is, the infinity of possible things.[10] But then, why is *Allah* too exalted to disclose Himself in a single form twice? Ibn al-Arabī (2016, Vol. 10: 190) explains:

> The cosmos is never fixed in a single state for a moment since [*Allah*] is ever-creating constantly. Were the cosmos to remain in a single state for two moments, it would be described by independence from [*Allah*].[11] . . . The existence of the similar [entities] for two moments . . . or repetition [of the similar entities] in different moments . . . would make entities something [that is] qualified by independence from [*Allah*] . . . [But, in practice, *Allah*] creates perpetually at each instance.

In a cosmos where entities have no fixity in a single state and unrepeatability is the rule, the reality (as manifestations of *Allah*) cannot be apprehended by reason. There is no fixity on the basis of which one's reason can start to consider *Allah*: if one's reason begins to consider *Allah*, one creates the knowledge of *Allah* through one's own consideration. This consideration cum fixity about the knowledge of *Allah* becomes open to repetition. However, it is not *Allah* who repeats Himself: for Ibn al-Arabī (2016, Vol. 2: 30), 'the Divine Vastness . . . disappear[s] through repetition of the affair. . . [but this Divine Vastness] has been established for us so that there is no repetition in the Divine Side (read *Allah*)'. Because of this non-repetitiveness in the Divine Side, it is impossible to comprehend *Allah* (i.e., 'source of creation or 'root of reality') through reason. Thus, for Ibn al-Arabī, every attempt to comprehend Him is 'nothing but passage from veil to veil . . . reason cannot delimit Him by one of those forms, since He destroys that limitation by the

next self-disclosure' (Chittick, 1989: 230–231). As a result, all attempts to fix a sign onto *Allah* (or to somehow tie Him to reason's own finite perspective) says nothing about *Allah* but about those who create *Allah* through their own considerations.

If the cosmos – as a place of manifestations of *Allah* – is something that constantly fluctuates and, thus, reflects a lack of repetition (*takrar*), then it can be safely concluded that repetition is an illusion created by reason.[12] Thus, Ibn al-Arabī dismisses reason as a constraint (*diq*) that misleadingly prevents the knowledge of a fluctuating cosmos and opens up a space for repetition. Attributing fluctuation to heart and fixity to rational thought (*'aql*), Ibn al-Arabī (2016, Vol. 9: 339) states:

> The reality in existence lies in variegation (*telvin*). . . . The heart longs to witness this reality. [*Allah*] made the heart the locus of this longing to bring the actualization (*tahsil*) of this reality near to man, since there is fluctuation in the heart. [*Allah*] did not place this longing in the rational faculty since reason possesses delimitation. If this longing were in the rational faculty, the person might see that he is fixed in a single state. But since it lies in the heart, fluctuation comes upon him quickly.[13]

For Ibn al-Arabī, the meaning of the word 'reason' (*'aql*) is derived from the word 'fetter' (*'iqal*), which is why 'reason . . . in contrast to the heart . . . comes from the world of delimitation' (Chittick, 1989: 109): unlike the heart (which fluctuates by itself), there is nothing in reason that operates by itself; in fact, what reason claims to know is something that is derived from its characteristic of acceptance (or interpretation). When something is accepted (or interpreted) through reason (or rational consideration), it automatically becomes fixed, repeatable and, therefore, delimited. But what is the function of this fixation/repetition/delimitation? According to Ibn al-Arabī, the inevitable result of fixation/repetition/delimitation – which, in turn, stabilizes unrepeatability and limits infinite manifestations – is to create a mechanism of control for those who confine themselves to a single image of *Allah*. Ibn al-Arabī (2016, Vol. 10: 80) clarifies:

> Were the Essence to make the loci of manifestation (*mazahir*) manifest, It would be known. Were It known, It would be encompassed (*ihata*). Were It encompassed, It would be limited (*hadd*). Were It limited, It would be confined (*inhisar*). Were It confined, It would be owned (*mülk*).

For Ibn al-Arabī, the subjugation of infinite manifestations, the regulation of unpredictability, and the imposition of predictability upon the cosmos/*Allah* through rational thinking (*'aql*) unavoidably result in confinement and possession. This is where the temporal power (*mülk*) emerges. As such, the

willingness to know (about *Allah*) is not independent from earthly purposes. The arbitrary construction of repeatability not only makes a scheme of cause and effect possible, but it also evokes dualisms such as good/bad, here/there, superior/inferior, and before/after, on which stable interpretations are based (Chittick, 1989: 63). For example, the act of defining *Allah* as 'immanence' is to privilege one's own definition over others. Ibn al-Arabī (1980: 75) warns:

> If you insist only on His transcendence, you restrict Him, and if you insist only on His immanence you limit Him. If you maintain both aspects [i.e., His 'other-worldly transcendence' and 'this-worldly immanence'], then you are right . . . *while the one who isolates Him tries to regulate Him*. Beware of comparing Him if you profess duality, and, if unity, of making Him transcendent. You are not He and you are He and you see Him in the essences of things both boundless and limited.

From a comparative perspective, Ibn al-Arabī is very close to Al-Ghazālī, especially when the latter claims that knowledge is not fixed in things by nature, rather it is generated by our interpretation. In agreement with Al-Ghazālī, Ibn al-Arabī rejects the realist epistemology (how do we know what we know through causation) and makes an important contribution to the critical understanding of rationality in a non-Western context: to be sure, Ibn al-Arabī's emphasis upon fixation, repetition, and delimitation (read 'conscious ignorance') is a serious challenge for a positivist/rationalist methodology of decoding social phenomena. At the heart of Ibn al-Arabī's ontology lies the rejection of any repetition within the cosmos because of the Divine Vastness. What exists in the world has no fixed essence that a researcher can capture. Since it is 'the nature of things that determines their cognitive possibilities for us' (Bhaskar, 1998: 25), Ibn al-Arabī's ontological assumptions (what exists in the world) are critical when it comes to the process of knowing about things. Preferably, the main focus of a researcher following Ibn al-Arabī's ontological stance shifts from things and their nature to how do we know about things and their nature. But then, unlike Al-Ghazālī who makes a concession about the possibility of reliable knowledge (whereby reliable knowledge is possible only when causes are reduced to the habitual courses of nature), Ibn al-Arabī's ontology is so distinct that any compromise/concession seems impossible. From Ibn al-Arabī's ontological stance, all attempts to acquire knowledge leads us to bewilderment if we have no worldly intentions in the process of knowing about things.

At this point, one might wonder if Ibn al-Arabī's ontological stance forecloses the epistemological possibilities for doing research: if there is no repeated thing a researcher can observe, does that mean the end of doing research? The answer is 'no'. Unlike the philosophers who perform research to unfold the truth, Ibn al-Arabī encourages a researcher to unfold the very

process of producing the truth. Therefore, the researchers who employ Ibn al-Arabī should focus on how the truth is produced instead of searching what the truth is. Repetition is the key concept here. Any researcher who aims to illustrate the exercise of temporal power should inescapably examine the process of repetition of temporal truth and its dissemination through texts. In a universe where unrepeatability is the rule, Ibn al-Arabī opines that the scholarly activity of repetition (or creating fixity) is arbitrary. Thus, the key point for a researcher is to investigate the production of what is repeatable through interpretation: for Ibn al-Arabī, interpretation is the process that makes ever-changing and unrepeatable things fixed and repeatable, and it is this process upon which the temporal power bases itself. Indeed, the repetition of phenomena – observed by the eye as facts, and conceptualized by the mind as patterns – is more reflective of power-relations between the interpreter and the powerful, than of the cosmos itself. The following section, accordingly, tackles how to elucidate empirically testable proposition about the origins of knowledge, its conditions of emergence, and its role in the exercise of power-relations.

HOW TO DO RESEARCH? PROBING POWER-RELATIONS BETWEEN JURISTS AND KINGS

How power-relations are sustained through repetition? How repetition is produced as a form of knowledge? Where do we look at in order to understand this production of repetition as a form of knowledge? According to Ibn al-Arabī, there are three groups of people who are interested in knowledge: those who employ reflective consideration and rational proofs (philosophers); those who use the juridical proofs, analogies, and assigning of causes in order to grasp the rulings of the Law (jurists); and finally those who are receptive toward the divine opening in the most perfect manner (the 'unlettered' people). Since the last group (the 'unlettered' people) does not produce any knowledge but bewilderment from what was unveiled by the Revealed, 'the scales of rational thought and the outward aspects of the scales of legal investigation among the jurists' discard much of what those people have mentioned (Chittick, 1989: 236). Among these three groups of people, the first two play a direct role in the production of knowledge. However, Ibn al-Arabī directs his strident criticism toward the role of those jurists/scholars who make use of rationality to sustain knowledge-power nexus.

The knowledge-power nexus is sustained through repetition. And repetition (as a knowledge-form) is produced through interpretation (*ta'wil*). But why do people interpret things in one way or another? To put it differently, what makes it rational to interpret in one way rather than another and what

makes it rational to advance one conception of *Allah* rather than another? For Ibn al-Arabī, interpretation emerges from the power-relations between jurists and kings. Without these power-relations, no interpretation can turn into a fixed code. This is so because the legal bodies may make a ruling today concerning a Shari'ite case and tomorrow something may happen that will make clear to them that they were mistaken in yesterday's ruling (Chittick,1989: 237). But what makes the jurists blind against the eventual realization of mistakes? It is the jurists' relations to the king (i.e., possessor of worldly authority/power). Therefore, it is not the rational considerations about what *Allah* revealed, but the jurists' power-relations with the king that make an interpretation fixed and repeatable.

These power-relations between jurists and kings operate as a two-tier process. First, the jurists (as interpreters of Law) fear punishment by the king (who is the possessor of worldly authority/power) because of his commandment. This is so because the knowers of *Allah* have been in a state of constraint and incapability forced by the majority of kings (Chittick, 1989: 73). Second, the jurists interpret the revealed book in order to gain favour from those who are in positions of power (including the king). Most kings support the jurists who are dedicated to the mockery of this world, to the love of position and leadership, and to the kings' desires to perform those activities which are not permitted by the Law. Ibn al-Arabī (2016, Vol. 11: 121) elaborates:

> When the winds of caprice dominate over souls and the learned seek high degrees with kings they leave the clear path and incline toward far-fetched interpretations. Thus they are able to walk with the personal desires of the kings in that within which their souls have a caprice, and the kings can support themselves by a Shari'ite command. It may happen that the jurist (*faqih*) does not himself believe the interpretation, but he gives pronouncements (*fatwa*) in accordance with it.[14]

Ibn al-Arabī (2016, Vol. 13: 86–88) calls these jurists 'exoteric/formalist scholars' who adhere to the knowledge of external forms (*ashab 'ilm al-rusum*): they are exoteric because they devote themselves to love for position, emotion for domination over others, sense of being superior over *Allah*'s real servants and *Allah*'s will-to-see that the common people need them; these people are those who desire to be appointed to posts as judges, notaries, inspectors, or teachers in a school (*madrasah*); they also submit to the wealthy and powerful because of their craving for wealth or fear of power. It is only the divine intervention into earthly affairs by 'Mehdi' (i.e., 'divinely guided human beings') that clearly exposes how these jurists (or exoteric scholars) produce biased interpretations and arbitrary commandments for earthly purposes: Mehdi's intervention in earthly affairs annihilates the jurists'/exoteric scholars' privilege from the common mass, and the differences among

commandments. The last point is worth exploring in greater detail because, for Ibn al-Arabī, the differences among commandments erupt from interpretation, which is where temporal power materializes itself.

Ibn al-Arabī presumes that interpretation originates from both coercion and consent on the part of the jurists. That is, interpretation does not indicate a one-way relation: notably, the temporal power of the king is not exercised without the interpretations generated by the jurists, and the interpretations generated by the jurists become readily acceptable only when they serve the desires of the king. It may appear as if *Allah* gives jurists/exoteric scholars a kind of 'domination over [other] creatures through the pronouncements they make', namely the interpretations of the Law and, therefore, 'the power in the life of this world' seems to belong to these scholars (Chittick, 1989: 248). Nevertheless, these scholars are not really in a position of power. That is because power, for Ibn al-Arabī, does not refer to power *tout court*: rather, power is something that is produced by/in 'relations' between the jurists/exoteric scholars and the king. Therefore, there is a tenacious connection between the jurists/exoteric scholars (as interpreters) and the king (as possessor of worldly authority/power): many a time (not always), interpretation lies in the core of temporal power (king's/ruler's authority), especially when the jurists/exoteric scholars – whose 'hearts have been overcome by love for this world and the search for position and leadership' – come as 'needy to the doors of ignorant governors and rulers' (Ibn al-Arabī, 2016, Vol. 3: 35).

However, the jurists/exoteric scholars do not legitimize their interpretation by pointing out their relations to the king/ruler/governor. Rather, they resort to reason through which the fixed code gains its legitimacy. This is the point where Ibn al-Arabī's discontent with interpretation (*ta'wil*) emerges because the interpreter assumes the authority of reason in judging Divine words. For him, reason distorts those things that seem impossible to rational faculties, and therefore 'reason's faith [here] is in its own interpretation, not in the [divine] report': this is why people with rational faculties diverge in accordance with the measure of their consideration concerning *Allah* and they accuse each other of not knowing *Allah* (Chittick, 1989: 201). Since interpretation is nothing but delimitation, the so-called rational people create a fixation about *Allah* in which others have no belief. But then, true knowledge of *Allah* is not something reached through rational thinking; it is instead thrown by *Allah* into the heart of the knower.[15] Ibn al-Arabī, thus, proceeds to strongly condemn those who are not moderate and forcibly partake in interpretation in such a way that the correspondence (*munasaba*) between revealed words and their meanings gets lost: Ibn al-Arabī declares that the path of salvation for those who have no insight from *Allah* is not to interpret; in fact, there is nothing more harmful for the servant of *Allah* than to interpret things.

Remarkably, the prolific arguments of medieval Islamic Sufi philosophers such as Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabī – who problematize rational explanation of earthly affairs as it wrongfully imposes interpretation-based knowledge upon things for the purpose of (re)gaining close connections with temporal power – can produce well-substantiated theoretical knowledge in Global IR. Perhaps, one might claim that the Foucauldian and Derridean critical and post-structuralist conceptions of power have been in place in the non-Western context of Sufism for a long time. However, it is crucial to recall that this non-Western context of Sufism, unlike Foucauldian and Derridean critical and post-structuralist traditions, does not begin or end up with the notion of 'regime of truth' or 'deconstruction of truth': rather, this Sufi approach is premised upon the acceptance of a cosmos which has plural ever-changing manifestations (read multiple apparent truths) of a single Divine Presence/*Allah* (read single hidden truth). Rather than relying purely on Western critical and post-structuralist studies to go beyond a positivist understanding of reality (or a realist conception of power), one can develop post-Western methodological and theoretical claims from this Sufi approach. The following section winds up this exploration by raising some preliminary questions about how a non-Western Sufi thought – for example, the rejection of reason-based interpretation or repetition of knowledge (not knowledge itself) – can innovatively instigate the study of knowledge-power nexus in social sciences, in general, and in Global IR, in particular.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The fact that the thoughts of Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabī have many similarities with that of the post-structuralist thinkers of our own time prompts us to ask the following questions: why do we, as non-Western academics, build our theoretical claims on the arguments supplied by Western thinkers? Why Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabī have no place in studies dealing with knowledge-power nexus at least in non-Western cases? Several ideas of Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabī about knowledge-power nexus surpass the conceptualizations of Western post-structuralist thinkers (e.g., the single Divine Presence hidden at the core of multiple apparent manifestations, the cosmos where unrepeatability is the rule, and the primacy of heart, not reason, in the process of acquiring knowledge) and force us to ask another set of questions: is it possible to study knowledge-power nexus in a post-Western way? Instead of using Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabī to sharpen or consolidate the predominant Western post-structuralist theory, can we utilize Western post-structuralist thinkers of our age to develop a sophisticated Sufi theory of knowledge-power nexus? Those and especially the last one are challenging

questions not only because Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabī themselves did not propose a specific method for studying power but also because any attempt to talk about such a method bears the risk of distorting what Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabī said.

Yet what Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabī said can be systematically evoked for producing valid theoretical knowledge in Global IR. Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabī's profound yet simple theoretical proposition is this: the scholarly process of fixation, repetition, and delimitation – through which temporal power is exercised – is arbitrary. It is arbitrary because unrepeatability (or constant change) is the rule of the cosmos. While the arbitrary construction of meanings in a cosmos fraught with constant change requires representation, the fixation of this representation in one way or another inevitably necessitates a process of repetition. Therefore, there is a necessary linkage between meanings, representations, repetitions, and power-relations. Fixed meanings are incessantly (re)constructed by centres of power, thanks to the latter's ability to control representations and repetitions in a specific way. Without repetitions (which sustains power-relations), representation has nothing to do with meaning. As a result, power-relations produce meanings, through which our ambitions, desires, wishes, and mundane practices become possible: in fact, power-relations are impermanent goods of this world through which the 'governors' (kings/rulers) turn the people into 'governed' (subjects/citizens). Any researcher who is interested in tracing the roots of this power should focus on its arbitrariness, which itself is the logical result of power-relations. To put this in a formulation, when a jurist/exoteric scholar interprets, he or she fixes and delimits things; when the things are fixed/delimited, they are repeated; when they are repeated, they are predicted; when they are predicted, they are governed. Since power operates through regular repetition of commandment (read Law) by jurists/exoteric scholars, any study of power should focus on the genesis of representations and their travel from the moment of emergence to the next phase in time. It is these representations (impermanent goods of this world) that turn the people into governed subjects/citizens, and it is these governed subjects/citizens through whom the governors (rulers/kings) gain their meaning.[16]

Despite the discontent with Al-Ghazālī's entanglement with philosophical reflection, Ibn al-Arabī mentions Al-Ghazālī with praise by calling him the 'spokesman' of the people of the true path. Al-Ghazālī challenges the Mut'azilite theory of causation according to which one thing certainly causes another: in so doing, Al-Ghazālī weakens the scholars'/jurists' legitimacy to achieve true knowledge. A century later, Ibn al-Arabī not only provides a complex explanation of why true knowledge is impossible but also asks a very critical question: what is the function of knowledge as we have it?

In answering this question, he rejects the idea of defining power as something possessed by the king; he, rather, stresses that the power is something that emerges from the 'relations' between the king, intermediaries (including jurists/exoteric scholars), and the people. In this new understanding of 'power as relations', the function of knowledge produced by intermediaries is to retain status-quoist centres of power and to manufacture governed subjects/citizens. As such, this Sufi approach diverts attention from what is true knowledge to how jurists/exoteric scholars fix/create knowledge through interpretation.

Lastly, one might speculate what is the use of medieval Islamic Sufi philosophers like Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabī if their theory of knowledge has many similarities with the post-structural theory of our age? Precisely, the use of medieval Islamic Sufi philosophers (and their theory of knowledge) lies in their ability to break free from a few disciplinary myths: for instance, the myth of Husserl's claim that establishes Western monopoly over theoretical-knowledge production. In contrast to Husserl's claim, one can demonstrate how authentic non-Western texts (produced prior to the domination of Western philosophy in social sciences) contain abundant themes and concepts that could be utilized for producing theoretical knowledge, especially the theoretical knowledge about how fixed/repeated/delimited knowledge-forms interact with positions of power in specific cases. Unfortunately, most existing IR studies in non-Western world are reduced to mere imitations of Western thoughts. Under these circumstances, the transition from imitations to hybridities in IR (and other social sciences) is possible only when we develop novel theoretical insights from non-Western texts and read them together with current hegemonic Western theories. It is only when non-Western texts are (re)read together with current hegemonic Western theories that one can hope to make the academic discipline of IR genuinely global.

NOTES

1. According to Husserl (1970: 273), the English Dominions, the United States, and the like clearly belong to Europe, whereas the Eskimos or Indians presented as curiosities at fairs, or the Gypsies, who constantly wander about Europe, do not.

2. Shahi (2018) raises a strong criticism against such restrictive usage of non-Western philosophical texts as it is bound to end up generating derivative discourses of the same Western/Eurocentric theories.

3. This chapter does not interrogate why and how non-Western philosophical texts are excluded from mainstream theories in today's social sciences (including IR). However, this task has been undertaken by J. M. Hobson who asserts that IR theory is Eurocentric because it ultimately aims to pursue Western interests. Hobson (2012: 16),

therefore, changes Cox's famous mantra as follows: 'IR theory is (almost) always for the West and for the Western interests'.

4. For a detailed discussion on how Islamic philosophy could contribute to post-Western IR, see Shani (2008) and Tickner and Blaney (2013).

5. Acharya (2016: 10) argues that promoting Global IR calls for a critical re-evaluation of the established conventions of knowledge production in the field: 'The real issue is exclusion and marginalization, which are a function of how IR is produced, especially the prevailing and deep-rooted assumptions in the field about what constitutes authentic and proper knowledge, including theory and method. These assumptions have formed through and been supported by the evolution of IR mainly in the Anglo-Saxon world (a term used by Mearsheimer). These assumptions are also a function of the concentration—both in terms of numbers and prestige—in the United States of the journals, publishing houses, and institutions of learning and training in IR'.

6. This is precisely what Gramsci (1989: 170–171) warns against when he says 'anybody who [is accurately identifying the fundamental and permanent elements of the process] has in fact a 'programme' for whose victory s/he is working and his/her prediction is precisely an element contributing to that victory'.

7. For a different reading which argues that Al-Ghazālī did not make any concessions, see Marmura (2005: 137–154).

8. This idea of Ibn al-Arabī is strikingly similar to Foucault's understanding of knowledge-power nexus. For Foucault (1995: 27), 'There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations'.

9. This part is the revised version of my previous work; see Balci (2015).

10. Ibn al-Arabī (2016, Vol. 9: 251 and 300; Vol. 2: 180; Vol. 9: 251) claims: 'The root of all things is difference (*tefrika*). . . . If there is similarity in the facts, nothing would be different from those which are said as similar . . . the thing which differentiates [one thing] from the others is the thing itself. . . . [However], what separates two similar things is difficult to comprehend through witnessing.

11. This idea comes from Ibn al-Arabī's understanding of 'oneness of reality' or 'God's oneness' (*tawhid*). All things are interconnected through a web whose centre is *Allah*. Therefore, nothing is possible without Him and His creation.

12. In order to foreground this illusion created by reason, Ibn al-Arabī (2016 Vol. 9: 88 and 103) defines *Allah* as 'He/not He' (*huwa la huwa*) and the cosmos as 'unknown/known'.

13. Ibn al-Arabī observes that the fluctuation in the heart is equivalent to the self-transmutation in divine forms. It is for this reason that the knowledge of the Real (*al-Haqq*) is possible only through the heart, not reason.

14. For an in-depth analysis of this point, see Almond (2004).

15. However, Ibn al-Arabī (2016, Vol. 9: 333) does not completely deny interpretation but says that reality reached through interpretation is just a 'coincidence'. He, therefore, neither rejects the commandment reached through interpretation nor accepts it.

16. Not surprisingly, Ibn al-Arabī argues that 'a master is tied to the existence of the slave' (Chittick, 1989: 64).

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Chapter 3

Rūmī and Global International Relations: A Sufi Review of Epistemology, Ontology, and Methodology

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> *It's true, this home, our world, extends in six directions, yet just one point will orient us . . . since that focal point of adoration has no homeland, build your nest in nothingness!* (Lewis, 2007)

The academic discipline of International Relations (IR) is slowly waking up to the reality of the "Global"—that is, the reality which cannot be legitimately grasped by a one-sided Eurocentric perspective. As a consequence, IR is inviting an increased incorporation of non-Eurocentric worldviews. However, an increased incorporation of non-Eurocentric worldviews—for instance, the Chinese, Indian, or African philosophical-experiential vantage points, often voiced under the rubric "non-Western IR"—cannot make IR less Eurocentric or more "Global" if the following slippery grounds are overlooked: (1) if the non-Western knowledge-forms are used to inadvertently reproduce a "derivative discourse" of the same Eurocentric/Western IR theories (e.g., the Indian literary classic *Arthaśāstra* is frequently mobilized to manufacture an Indian replica of Western Realpolitik), thereby failing to excavate fresh insights that could surpass the conjectural limits of Eurocentric/Western IR; and/or (2) if the non-Western knowledge-forms are used to purposely manufacture an "exceptionalist discourse" which is narrowly applicable to the realities of a native time-space zone (e.g., the postcolonial and decolonial debates that sanction an unbridgeable divide between the particularist politico-experiential realities of the colonizing and colonialized worlds), thereby failing to generate a universalist explanation that grants a broad spectrum relevance to Eurocentric/Western IR.

Against the backdrop of these realizations, the present chapter raises a central question: Does Sufism provide a fertile epistemological-ontological-methodological ground for creating a "non-derivative" and "non-exceptionalist"

Global IR theory? In its attempt to find an appropriate response to this question, the chapter awakens the philosophical insights attained from the poetry of a thirteenth-century Persian Sufi scholar, Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī. The chapter hypothesizes that the "threefold attribute"—epistemological monism, ontological immaterialism, and methodological eclecticism—embodied in the specificities of Rūmī's poetry and ingrained in the generalities of Sufi philosophy, offers a preliminary base for imagining a non-derivative and non-exceptionalist Global IR theory.[1] While epistemological dualism of Eurocentric IR presupposes a knowledge-situation characterized by a rigid subject-object distinction, "epistemological monism" of Sufism recommends a knowledge-situation marked by a potential subject-object merger. Unlike the ontological priority in Eurocentric IR (which considers the "science of being" as an obligatory starting point for knowledge production), Sufism endorses "ontological immaterialism" (which accepts the "non-being/non-existence/nothingness" as the originating point of "being/existence") as a precondition for knowledge production. Furthermore, contrary to the preference for a compartmentalized methodology in Eurocentric IR (which sticks to either rationalism or reflectivism), Sufism supports "methodological eclecticism" which supplies a heterogeneous platter that blends rationalist, reflectivist, and even extra-rationalist methodological options for exploring reality. The chapter sets out to examine how this Sufi threefold attribute can be channelized to cultivate a "non-centric" Global IR theory.[2] Since Sufism survives as an illustrious "cosmopolitan meeting point" between the East and the West (Geaves et al., 2009; Hatina, 2007), as a "global cult symbolizing a global community" (Raudvere, 2009; Werbner, 2003), and as a "global history" with extensive temporal-spatial, sociopolitical, and theoretical-praxeological dimensions (Green, 2012; Raudvere and Stenberg, 2008), its probable employment for forming a Global IR theory is worth contemplation.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section briefly exposes the historical episodes that influenced Rūmī's life. The second section analyzes the Sufi threefold attribute in Rūmī's poetry that offers an inventive philosophical lens for envisioning a Global IR. Finally, the third section explains how this Sufi threefold attribute could function as interconnected threads in the propositional fabric of a Global IR theory. The chapter demonstrates that Sufism can formulate a Global IR theory with a "post-Western" commitment. In line with a post-Western commitment, the Sufi Global IR theory proposes to attain the following objectives: (1) expand (not displace) Eurocentric IR; (2) steer through the exteriors (not reproduce the interiors) of Eurocentric IR; (3) prompt an alternative (not just critical) investigation of IR; and (4) stimulate a universalist (not an exceptionalist) narrative of IR.

RŪMĪ'S LIFE: A TRYST WITH SUFISM

It is imperative to acquaint oneself with Rūmī's lived-experiences before venturing out to assemble the philosophical chips of his Sufi poetry.[3] Rūmī's life and thoughts were profoundly affected by three personalities, namely, his father Baha al-Din Valad, who was the king of clerics, his mentor Sayyid Burhan al-Din Muhaqqiq of Termez, and his famous and infamous companion Shams al-Din Tabrizi (Lewis, 2000). Rūmī was born in a family of erudite theologians in 1207 in Balkh (a small town near present Mazar-i-Sharif in Afghanistan). At that time, Greater Balkh was the chief center of Persian culture, where Sufism had progressed over several centuries (Nasr, 1987). In an effort to run away from the Mongol invasion between 1215 and 1220, Rūmī and his family traveled lengthily in the Muslim lands, performed pilgrimage to Mecca, and lastly settled in Konya, Anatolia, then part of the Seljuk Empire (present Turkey). Although little is known about these travels, it is widely known that Rūmī suffered a grave loss during these nomadic years of uncertainty—the death of his mother Mumina Khatun. An encounter with intense turmoil at an early stage played a vital role in Rūmī's growth as a mystic and a poet. Perhaps, Rūmī's emotional sensitivity and spiritual composure grew in large part as a defense against the transience, loss, and terror he underwent during his childhood (Tell, 2002).

At the age of seventeen, Rūmī married Gowhar Khatun and later had two sons, Sultan Valad and Ala-eddin Chalabi.[4] After two years of arrival in Konya, it so happened that Rūmī's father Baha al-Din Valad—a competent Islamic mystic of unknown lineage and the head of a religious institution—passed away (Öngören, 2004; Gölpınarlı, 2012). Once Baha al-Din Valad passed away, Rūmī succeeded his father as a professor of religious science in 1231. Incidentally, it was his father's former student Sayyid Burhan al-Din Mahaqqiq with whom Rūmī did a rigorous study of Sufi texts. Burhan—who was himself an eccentric hermit apathetic to customary beliefs and lineages—introduced young Rūmī to copious fasting retreats. While Rūmī carried on with his mystical experimentation, the Mongols invaded Anatolia in 1243. A year later, a mysterious Sufi dervish, Shams al-Din Tabrizi (Shams), came to Konya (Can, 2011). Shams had wandered from town to town looking for an authentic spiritual guide (*murshid*). On his way, he met many Sufi scholars, including Ibn al-Arabī, but found none of them suitable until he acquainted with Rūmī (Kaya, 2016). Rūmī's meeting with Shams in 1244 completely altered his life. Shams *esprit de corps* transformed Rūmī from a proficient teacher and jurist into an ascetic. Rūmī and Shams's bond is compared to Socrates's relationship with Plato (Keklik, 1987) or Abraham's

meeting with Melchizedek. To explain this bond, Basak (2017: 114) cites Murat Yagan's words:

> A Melchizedek and a Shams are messengers from the Source. They do nothing themselves but carry enlightenment to someone [like Rūmī] who can receive . . . someone who is either too full or too empty [or both] . . . [who], after receiving it, could apply this message for the benefit of humanity.

Unfortunately, Sham's presence in Rūmī's life was very short-lived. As Rūmī began to immerse himself more and more into ecstatic mystical conversations with Shams, it led to a slowdown in his teaching activities, and this caused resentment among his disciples. As a reaction to this problematic situation, Shams unexpectedly left Konya in 1246. Not surprisingly, Shams disappearance pushed Rūmī to a state of despair. After a year, Rūmī's son, Sultan Valad, found Shams in Syria (Damascus) and brought him back to Konya. As per the prevailing popular narrative, when Rūmī and Shams met for the second time, they fell at each other's feet: in this moment of surrender, it was difficult to discern who was the lover and who the beloved! Before long, however, Shams left Konya again. Despite being married to a member of Rūmī's extended family, Shams never returned to Konya after 1248. There is no agreement among scholars about what happened to Shams next: while some suggest that Shams was murdered by a few jealous disciples, the others opine that Shams went to his native place Tabriz where he was buried after a peaceful death.

Anyway, Rūmī's acute bereavement for Shams's death and his immense love for Shams found expression in an outpouring of music, dance, and poetry—*Divani Shamsi Tabrizi*. Rūmī wrote in one of his Odes: "I used to recite prayers. Now I recite rhymes and poems and songs!" Rūmī's extraordinary literary works have been organized across various categories: the poetry is divided into the Quatrains (*Rubayāt*), the Odes (*Ghazal*) of the Divan, and the six books of the Masnavi (Gardet, 1977); whereas the prose is divided into the Letters (*Makatib*), the Seven Sermons (*Majāles-e Sab'a*), and the Discourses (*Fīhi mā-fīhi*) (Schimmel, 1991). In general, Rūmī's writings interlinked the knowledge-forms flowing from diverse religious/cultural/civilizational sources and origins (Jonboboev, 2014), and yet reached at the same conclusion—that the belief within one's own inner self ultimately manifests itself into "one reality" (Abboushi Dallal, 1998). Rūmī died in 1273, and ever since, the night of his death has been annually celebrated as "Sebul Arus" (literally meaning, the night of the union). Uppal (2019: 567) reports:

> Jalaluddin Rumi died in 1273. This was the period when the Christians were fighting against Muslims—the Crusades. Crusades had been going on for

> 200 years. . . [But,] they were brought to an abrupt end. . . . Rumi was an initiator in diffusing the[m]. . . . The last crusade was fought in 1291. Within this short period of time, Rumi's concept of Christianity, Islam and Judaism being very close to each other worked very well. [Quite persuasively], Rumi [personified the life of] an interfaith man.

To commemorate the 800th birth anniversary of this interfaith man, UNESCO declared 2007 as the "International Year of Mevlana Rumi." Indisputably, the Sufi charm of Rūmī has expanded across the globe.[5] Estimating Rūmī's philosophical sophistication as "800 years ahead of the times," Coleman Barks, a prominent translator of Rūmī's poetry, claims:

> I feel there is a strong global movement, an impulse that wants to dissolve the boundaries that religions have put up and end the sectarian violence. It is said that people of all religions came to Rumi's funeral in 1273. Because, they said, "he deepens our faith wherever we are." This is a powerful element in his appeal now. (Ciabattari, 2014)

For sure, the interdisciplinary research on the political impact of Sufism in general (Lingwood, 2014; Hannoum, 2016; Rozehnal, 2016; Van Bruinessen and Howell, 2016; Akhtar, 2017) and of Rūmī in particular (Furlanetto, 2013; Vaziri, 2015; Cihan-Artun, 2016) has gained momentum in recent years. Still the philosophical qualifications of Sufism as a rich intellectual resource remain untapped in IR. Before this chapter makes an effort to fill in this existing lacuna, it is important to note that Rūmī's writings often contain an ambiguous symbolic representation of his theological visions. Nonetheless, Rūmī not only openly warns against a "strict literalism" in his theological interpretations of the Qur'an, Sharī'a, and so on (Sumner, 2017) but also plainly slams the preeminence of theology and jurisprudence as trustworthy knowledge-forms. His Masanavi prefigures:

> Your passions lead your reading of Quran
> How base and bent you make the clear intent . . .
> "I know what is licit, what's illicit." . . . But what about yourself?
> You cannot say if you're licit or illiterate
> You know religion's grounds and rules, and yet
> Look to your own roots, are they sound or not? (Lewis, 2009)

Because Rūmī's poetry showcases his unhesitant skepticism toward the academic disciplines of theology and jurisprudence, this chapter arouses Rūmī's poetry (not his prose on theology or jurisprudence) as a chosen route to envisage a Sufi Global IR theory. Of course, an exhaustive analysis of Rūmī's phenomenal poetry cannot be plausibly undertaken in the limited

space of a chapter. However, it is possible to undertake a selective reading of it with an objective to extract Rūmī's fundamental approach to the epistemological, ontological, and methodological aspects of reality. The idea is not to constrain Rūmī's poetry by trapping his all-encompassing poetic impulses into somewhat narrow prisons of epistemology, ontology, and methodology. Rather, the epistemological-ontological-methodological streamlining of his all-encompassing poetic impulses is motivated by the sole purpose of identifying the possible theoretical components of a non-derivative and non-exceptionalist Sufi Global IR theory.[6]

RŪMĪ'S POETRY: MAPPING THE SUFI EPISTEMOLOGICAL-ONTOLOGICAL-METHODOLOGICAL CONTOURS

What are the epistemological, ontological, and methodological approaches to reality that one gathers from Rūmī's poetry? Rūmī's epistemology—understood as the "source of knowledge"—is based upon the philosophy of monism. The philosophy of monism differs from that of dualism and holism. While dualism presumes a separate existence of two kinds of reality, namely "material" (physical) and "immaterial" (spiritual), holism perceives reality as interacting wholes (as of living organisms) which are greater than the sum of their elementary constituents. By contrast, monism presents a picture of reality wherein a variety of things—the wholes as well as their constituents—can be generally explained in terms of "one core reality."[7] In Sufism, this one core reality is projected as a single hidden entity that commonly characterizes a variety of things, thereby insisting upon a deep-seated "universal oneness" of reality.

Rūmī emphasizes upon this deep-seated universal oneness of reality when he declares: "I have put duality away; I have seen that the two worlds are one; One I seek, One I know, One I see, One I call" (Nicholson, 2013: 127). In accordance with the principle of epistemological monism, Rūmī states that the universal oneness of reality—as manifest in the "globe of union"—is a single hidden entity, often interpreted as single hidden divinity and mentioned as "You" or "I" in his poetry. This single hidden divinity encompasses not only the "material reality of creation," but also the "ideational reality of the purpose of creation." Explaining how "hiding is the hidden purpose of creation" (Hiling, 2007: 44), Rūmī utters:

> You play with the great globe of union,
> You that see everyone so clearly and cannot be seen.
> Even universal intelligence gets blurry when it thinks you may leave.
> You came here alone, but you create hundreds of new worlds. (Barks, 2003: 50)

Rūmī goes further to insist that the "once-realized oneness"—material and ideational oneness—of two or many worlds, nevertheless, slowly but surely converts into a "forgotten reality" or "lost reality," thereby stirring up deep agony and longing for union. Recounting the most intense and distressing cry that comes from the one who had once known the union and lost it, Rūmī discerns:

> But one who last year drank ecstatic union, the pre-eternity agreement,
> Who this year has a hangover from bad-desire wine,
> The way he cries out for the majesty, he's lost,
> Give me that longing! (Barks, 2002: 151)

For sure, the pangs of longing—as a reminder of forgotten/lost union (i.e., once-realized oneness)—seem intolerable. Still, Rūmī begs—"Give me that longing!"—precisely because the idea of "longing" in Rūmī's poetry is not only a sign of departure but also a promise of arrival, that is, a formula to arrive at a recaptured union. Rūmī announces: "The grief you cry out from draws you toward union. . . . This longing you express is the return message!' (Levoy, 2014: 132). Clearly, Rūmī's epistemological monism portrays reality as something that remains fraught with a core hidden oneness; the very throbbing pain of separation from oneness eventually leads to the much-sought pleasure of union with oneness. From this perspective, human reality stays terrifyingly yet passionately driven by an "emotional circularity" that moves away from and then goes back to the same core hidden "oneness of reality," as exemplified by the Sufi conceptualization of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.

But then, does this epistemological monism (as exemplified by the Sufi conceptualization of "oneness of reality/*waḥdat al-wujūd*") correspondingly entail an observable "oneness of being" at the ontological level as well? The answer is "no!" As the oneness beneath the globe of union remains hidden, the ontological reality—understood as the "science of being"—gets willingly or unwillingly defined by the norm of "plurality of existence" (i.e., "variety of things"). To the extent that this plurality of existence remains obvious, the ontological reality appears non-singular (read plural). Rūmī remarks:

> The disc of the sun does exist,
> But if you see only the ray-bodies, you may have doubts.
> The human-divine combinations are a oneness.
> Plurality, the apparent separation into rays. (Barks, 2003: 177)

Rūmī goes on to restate the suspicious ontological impressions that emanate from the myth of a plural glance:

> If ten lamps are present in one place,
> each differs in form from another;

> yet you can't distinguish whose radiance is whose
> when you focus on the light. (Helmminski and Helmminski, 1999: 28)

A cautious reading of Rūmī's poetry indicates that even though the ontological reality is marked by plurality, it strictly follows the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, that is, a doctrine according to which the plurality of being arises from "non-being/non-existence/nothingness." Rūmī asks: "New creatures whirl in from nonexistence, galaxies scattered around their feet. Have you met them?" (Barks, 2003: 27). In fact, the multilayered ontological reality in Rūmī's poetry becomes known through an "oppositional mixture" of "being" (*hast*) and "non-being" (*nist*), articulated through the Sufi concept of *wahdat al-shuhud*. Illustrating how the ontological reality of *wahdat al-shuhud* gets governed by a superficial "oppositional existence," Rūmī pinpoints:

> Nothing can be clear without a polar opposite present.
> Two banners, one black, one white, and between them something gets settled.
> Between Pharaoh and Moses, the Red Sea. (Barks and Moyne, 1988: 62)

Rūmī argues that the oppositions originate from unity in the same manner as the apparent plurality originates from unapparent singularity/oneness: in other words, the existence/being (*wujud*/*hast*) originate from nonexistence/nonbeing (*nist*), the colors originate from colorlessness, and the wars originate from peace. This oppositional existence of *wahdat al-shuhud* follows the principle of "ontological immaterialism," that is, the principle which believes that the invisible single nonbeing is the originating point of visible plural being. As such, the principle of ontological immaterialism becomes the prime precondition of creaturely existence. In other words, the whole creation comes out from nonexistence/nonbeing toward existence/being (Zarrabi-Zadeh, 2014). The principle of ontological immaterialism—whereby "being" erupts from "non-being"—resonates in the divine command, as stated in the Qur'an, "His command, when He desires a thing, is to say to it 'Be', and it is" (*kun faya kun*) (Qur'an, 36: 82).

So, what is Rūmī's prescribed methodology for unfolding the epistemologically monist and ontologically immaterial structure of reality? Undeniably, Rūmī shows a disapproval for shallow ontological plurality of appearance/form (*zāhir*) and demands a solid effort toward arriving at the core epistemological meaning of oneness (*bātin*). Rūmī commands: "If you want peace and purity, tear away the coverings!" (Akhavan, 2012: 182). Nonetheless, the coverings that camouflage the oneness of reality obtain a more confusing characteristic in the face of plurality. Rūmī warns: "If you give them musk or any fragrance of soul intelligence, they find it unpleasant and turn away. Others sit in the hot bathwater and get clean. They use the world differently" (Barks, 2003: 73). Rūmī readily admits the ever-fluctuating rational

orientations of plural beings. Yet Rūmī proposes a wide array of methodologies that could be uniformly operationalized in the process of approximating the oneness of reality, such as: (1) abrogating the rationality of mind (Abou-Bakr, 1994); (2) opening up of heart to love and pain (Mannani, 2010); (3) realizing the limitations of words; and (4) decoding the language of silence (Barks, 2003).

In order to establish the concept of "abrogation" as a partial shutdown of mind, Omaima Abou-Bakr dissects a few lines from Rūmī's poetry:

> Wine, by its light, is an abrogation of the mind,
> Just as the sun isolates and wipes out the stars . . .
> The mind cajoles . . .
> So avoid every prudent wheedler . . .
> Wine is wings to the intoxicated;
> It abrogated all cares, but not out of inadvertence;
> It nourished the minds and provided them with pollen. (Abou-Bakr, 1994: 56)

As a peculiar way of grasping reality, the method of abrogation calls for replacing the customary mental perception without fully neglecting or canceling it so as to be able to enter into a deeper zone of consciousness. Abou-Bakr (1994: 44) observes:

> Rūmī uses five variant forms of the term *aql* (mind) . . . to point out the loss of human reason in the face of [an] illuminating vision. . . . First, *nuha* [or mind that is] "captivated by this extraordinary wine." . . . Then the mind is given the attributes of cajoling, misleading, and deceiving (*al-'aql massah al-zamān*). . . . [It is] advised to avoid any person who relies on the use of mind, that is who is "*aqil*," aware, sober, and rational. Such a person who [continually] engages in the application of systematic thought will be a deceiver. . . . The last reference is to "*uqul*" [or minds that are] enriched by the wine with seeds of growth . . . . [Herein] the mind is suspended—not completely cancelled—to be replaced by another superior form of human perception. The outcome of this mental abrogation—as we see towards the end of the poem—is the creation of a new mental life, another form of consciousness.

Abou-Bakr's analysis reverberates in a different poem, wherein Rūmī proclaims: "Far-sighted reason—I have tested it. Henceforth, I'll make myself demented" (Lewis, 2000: 400). Evidently, the importance of mind-based rationality is belittled in Rūmī's poetry. But the heart subsists as a venue of "comprehensive human reality"—a way of love, a path of annihilation, of the beatitude of "as though it had never been" (Barks, 2003: xviii). Given that the original status of reality is nonbeing, an ample amount of energy goes into trying to let the heart break free of matter and mind so as to reenter the deep region of nonbeing. An immediate recognition of the dark sides of

being and an intentional contact of the heart with the unpleasant and painful internal states, thoughts, sensations, and emotions constitute a recurring theme in Rūmī's poetry. Rūmī explains: "The cure for pain is in the pain. Good and bad are mixed. If you don't have both, you don't belong to us" (Mirdal, 2012: 1207).

Refuting the significance of words in this heart- or emotion-based experiential methodology of penetrating reality, Rūmī advises: "Close the door of words, that the window of your heart may open; the moon's kiss only comes through an open window"[8] (Star, 1997: 158). Prescribing "silence" as an effective mode for going beyond mind/intellect/rationality and undertaking an emotional trip to reality via "love," Rūmī counsels:

> Some commentary clarifies,
> But with love silence is clearer.
> A pen goes scribbling along . . .
> But when it tries to write love, it breaks!
> If you want to expound on love,
> Take your intellect out and let it lie down in the mud.
> These words are an alternate existence.
> Hear the passage into silence and be that. (Barks, 2003: 102)

At a particular level of consciousness, Rūmī discovers the merger of the "self" with the "other/s" as the culminating stage in the overall methodological journey of realizing the oneness of reality. He avows:

> I am not of the East, nor of the West, nor of the land, nor of the sea . . .
> My place is the placeless; my trace is the traceless;
> 'Tis neither body nor soul,
> For I belong to the soul of the Beloved [read "other"]. (Ganguly, 1990: 134)

Rūmī concludes: "If you could get rid of yourself just once, the secret of secrets would open to you. The face of the unknown, hidden beyond the universe would appear on the mirror of your perception!" (Minhas, 2016: 71). Notably, Rūmī's grand eclectic methodology to seize the oneness of reality—by means of abrogating mind, triggering intense sensitivities of heart, overcoming the limits of language, plunging into silence, and at last losing one's self and dissolving it in the other/s, brings alive an epistemologically monist knowledge-situation underlined by a subject-object merger. And the arrival at this knowledge-situation underlined by a subject-object merger could be either experience-based (*ma'rifah*) or revelation-based (*'ilm*).[9] The experience-based methodology matches with the regular empirical techniques, whereas the revelation-based methodology exceeds the empirical borders, thereby moving into the realm of extra-empirical/extra-rational/

extra-causal methods of knowing reality. As per William Harmless (2007), the Sufi treatises differentiate between the mystic's inward experiential knowledge (*ma'rifah*) and the scholar's knowledge of religious externals (*'ilm*). Rūmī, regardless of his excellent theological training, is habitually contemptuous of scholarship. He confirms: "Love resides not in science and learning, scrolls and pages, whatever men chatter about, that way is not the lover's way" (Yarshater et al., 2010: 49). Unmistakably, the Sufi philosophy guiding Rūmī's road to reality—as it trickles down through a selective reading of his poetry—is marked by a threefold attribute, that is, epistemological monism, ontological immaterialism, and methodological eclecticism. The next section scrutinizes the prospects of using this Sufi threefold attribute for designing a Global IR theory.

THE SUFI THREEFOLD ATTRIBUTE AND GLOBAL IR THEORY: DRAFTING THE PRELIMINARY FRAMEWORK

Could Rūmī's Sufi knowledge-forms (i.e., epistemological familiarity with "oneness of reality," ontological awareness of "non-being as the source of plural being," and methodological journey leading to "self-other merger") serve as the foundation for a Global IR theory? In this context, it is crucial to recall that the multiple theories of Eurocentric IR remain inspired by the regular presupposition of "epistemological dualism," that is, a rigid separation between the subject and object of a knowledge-situation:

> [The works of] contemporary realists and liberals [i.e., IR rationalists] are quite explicitly dualist by virtue of the split between "material" and "ideational" (or "cognitive") factors on which their claims of causal efficacy rest. . . . IR constructivists . . . rest on an odd combination of ontological presumptions: the knowledge practices of actors are held to be in some sense continuous with the world in which they live, but the knowledge practices of scholars are somehow exempted from this internality so that they can establish truer accounts of situations. (Jackson, 2008: 150–151). . . . [Though the claims of IR] reflectivists are monist in that they do not believe that knowledge corresponds to a mind-independent world, but they are committed to the proposition that a systematic effort to analyze their own role as knowledge-producers [or subjects] and to locate themselves with reference to their broader social contexts will yield knowledge not only of things experienced [object 1], but valid knowledge of social arrangements [object 2] that order and give rise to those experiences.[10] (Jackson, 2016: 174)

In some way or the other, IR rationalists, constructivists, and reflectivists stay wedded to the idea of subject-object distinction. In fact, it is this unanimous

promotion of the idea of subject-object distinction that makes IR "Eurocentric": markedly, the subject-object distinction is central to not only "modern science" but also "postmodern anti-science," which first started off in Europe and then gained a universalist claim through export to the colonized parts of the globe (i.e., the non-West). To confront the universalist claims of Eurocentric IR, the non-Western postcolonial and decolonial IR seek to deliver a holist view of reality: a holist view that "sutures together" the "missing particularist narratives of/from the non-Eurocentric parts" with the "provincialized particularist narratives of/from the Eurocentric parts" for obtaining the whole/holist reality of IR (Chowdhry, 2007; Duvall and Varadarajan, 2007). Nonetheless, this holist view of reality created by postcolonial and decolonial IR reinforces the same Eurocentric subject-object distinction: while Eurocentric IR maintains the separation between the West (as subject) and the Rest, the postcolonial and decolonial IR overturn this knowledge-situation and preserve the separation between the Rest (as subject) and the West. As the rigid subject-object distinction via epistemological dualism in Eurocentric IR and in non-Eurocentric postcolonial/decolonial IR removes the opportunity of a "West-Rest merger" in the universalist vision of a Global IR, it is the Sufi epistemological monism that creates room for alternatively grabbing this opportunity.

The Sufi epistemological monism—which foretells a potential "subject-object merger"—is capable of giving a free rein to a Global IR theory that "expands (not displaces)" Eurocentric IR by way of adding a range of novel concepts/perspectives that have hitherto remained exterior to it. For example, the Sufi monist concept of "oneness of reality" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) is situated on the principle of *ana al-haqq*, literally meaning "I am the truth"—in effect, this principle depicts the reality of "one truth" that becomes accessible only when "I" (as subject) sees itself as (or merges itself with) the object (or "truth"). This Sufi monist probability of "subject-object merger" could not only induce a Global IR theory but also problematize a variety of dualist conceptual categories in Eurocentric IR: some of these dualist conceptual categories are identity (self–other), ethics (good–bad/civilized–uncivilized/decent–rogue), power (strong–weak), time (pre–post), and space (here–there). In contrast to the "identity question" in Eurocentric IR—which is stuck with the problems of "self-other difference" (Tsygankov, 2008)—the Sufi Global IR theory could present the concept of a "dynamic momentary self" (*nafs*) that does not enduringly carry a selfhood but owns a core monist essence of "selflessness" (Chittick, 2007). Needless to say, the problems of "self-other difference" in Eurocentric IR can be diluted if the dynamic/momentary property of *nafs* is imposed upon the seemingly fixed identities of the "self" and the "other/s."

More than ever, when Eurocentric IR recognizes "rigid dualism" as an obstacle to a sober ethic of international responsibility (Coady, 2002), the Sufi Global IR theory could put forward an unconventional proposal of "ethical monism" (Smirnov, 2007). Besides, instead of an emphasis upon outward-looking "outer power" in Eurocentric IR—whereby the "self" intends to manipulate the separated "other/s" via hard power, soft power, smart power (Nye, 2013)—the Sufi Global IR theory (infused with ethical monism) could supply the notion of an inward-looking "inner power" (Ayub, 2016): this inward-looking inner power could differently decipher the phenomenal gaps, rivalries, frictions, conflicts, and wars which are rooted in the under-known identities of seemingly distinct but otherwise interconnected "self" and "other/s." Also, in contrast to the dualist debates upon time and space in Eurocentric IR—whereby the "self" and "other/s" are positioned on either linear or nonlinear temporal scale (Schulz-Forberg, 2013), and either materialist or discursive spatial scale (Kleinschmidt and Strandsbjerg, 2010)—the Sufi Global IR theory could reposition the "self" and "other/s" along various monist temporal-spatial frames:[11] for instance, Tustari's "primordial time," Shibli's "paradox of the eternal moment," Daylami's "past and future compressed into the presence," Ayn al-Qudat's "black light," Kharraz's "annihilation of temporality and subsistence in eternity through concepts of *waqt* and *wajd*," Bayazid's "ecstasy," and Baha-i Walad's "co-being of the eternal" (Böwering, 1992).

Also, the Sufi ontological immaterialism (wherein the "non-being/non-existence/nothingness" is accepted as the originating point of "being/existence") could append a set of untested ontological conceptions to the traditional Eurocentric IR thinking. While the Kyoto School has already activated Nishida Kitaro's (1987) ideas on "nothingness" as a thematic element in non-Western IR (Shimizu et al., 2014), the Sufi Global IR theory could further incorporate the thoughts on nonbeing/nonexistence/nothingness that are "exterior (not interior)" to Eurocentric IR, such as, the thoughts on the universe as mixed appearance of being and nonbeing (*wahdat al-shuhud*); human existence as expected combination of nonbeing (*nist*), being (*hast*), and universal being (*al-insan al-kamil*); and the non-repetitive vastness of existence (*al-tawassu' al-ilahi*). Interestingly, these Sufi thoughts on nonbeing/nonexistence/nothingness could develop an "alternative (not just critical)" notion of the very goal of global politics (i.e., "what is" versus "what ought to be"), and the dependability of this goal on the character of human nature (i.e., virtuous versus evil). In other words, Eurocentric IR supposes that the goal of global politics is to furnish competing visions of how the world is and how it ought to be, thereby pushing forward the conviction that politics is ontology (Wight, 2006). It further supposes that the biological roots

of this global politics (understood as ontology) remains buried in a simple or complex representation of human nature (Crawford, 2009). Alternatively, Sufism not only undermines the importance of ontology but also disallows the ontological location of the world into many hierarchical realms, that is, the descending schema of the four ontological worlds—world of divinity (*lahut*); world of domination (*jabarut*); world of dominion (*malakut*); and world of humanity (*nasut*) (Zarrabi-Zadeh, 2014). The inconsequentiality of ontology in Sufi approach to human nature is expressed through the concept of "universal being" or "perfect man" (*al-insan al-kamil*) that carves a "universalist (not exceptionalist)" standard of human perfection through an inquiry into the "inner state" of human consciousness. From this standpoint, the exoteric ontological aspects of human beings, including biology, are considered irrelevant (Shaikh, 2009).

Going beyond the compartmentalized methodology for knowledge production in Eurocentric IR (which subscribes to either rationalism or reflectivism), the methodological eclecticism of Sufism brings forth a wide range of rationalist/reflectivist/extra-rationalist tools for exploring reality: for example, "rational thought" (*aql*), "rational teaching" (*kalam*), "interpretation" (*tawil*), "unveiling" (*kashf*), "speech" (*guyai*), "repetition" (*dhikr*), "lack of repetition" (*takrar*), "imagination" (*khayal*), "silence" (*khamushi*), and so on. In Eurocentric IR, rationalist theories establish a "subject-object correspondence" for understanding reality, thereby pursuing Karl Popper's strategy of conjectural refutation (Neufeld, 1995). By contrast, reflectivist theories—as informed by the Frankfurt School's criticism of Karl Popper's inconsideration of the social conditions under which scientific knowledge is formed—construct reality by mapping an interest-guided "intersubjectivity," not subject-object correspondence (Fluck, 2017). From a methodological standpoint, both rationalist "subject-object correspondence" and reflectivist "intersubjectivity" follow epistemological dualism: rationalist subject-object correspondence connects the mental representations of the subject with the inherent properties of a separately lying object, whereas reflectivist intersubjectivity connects the perceptions of various subjects with regard to a separately lying object. However, Sufism denies a compulsory subject-object separation in every knowledge-situation. It, rather, inserts an untapped methodology to overcome the subject-object separation in a knowledge-situation: in Sufism, this methodology is called *baqā' wa fanā'* (literally meaning "subsistence and annihilation").

While *baqā'* implies the imperfect subsistence of subject into the consciousness of a plural world (object), *fanā'* means an annihilation of the subject by passing away into the consciousness of a singular world (object). In other words, the moment of *baqā'* (with its consciousness of a plural

world) retains subject-object separation, whereas the moment of *fanā'* (with its consciousness of a singular world) dissolves subject-object separation. Put together, the methodology of *baqā'* and *fanā'* (i.e., subsistence and annihilation) is an "ongoing process" that gives recognition to both the plural and singular experiences of reality (Milani, 2014). As the methodology of *baqā'* and *fanā'* gives recognition to both the plural and singular experiences of reality, it mixes diverse rationalist/reflectivist/extra-rationalist methodological options whose origins or applications cannot be firmly tied down to a specific spatiotemporal center of situated knowledge-forms.[12] Since the origins and applications of these methodological options cannot be firmly tied down to a specific spatiotemporal center of situated knowledge-forms, the Sufi Global IR theory (riding on these methodological options) becomes essentially "non-centric" in outlook.

At this stage, it is not difficult to surmise the preliminary framework of the non-centric Sufi Global IR theory, which thrives upon the following epistemological-ontological-methodological principles (Shahi, 2018):

1. The oneness of the world as a political entity remains a hidden reality.
2. The political nonexperience of the hidden reality of "one world" gives birth to the oppositional political experience of the apparent reality of "many worlds."
3. In IR, the apparent reality of many worlds—as separated from the hidden reality of one world—is nonetheless a naturalized political experience of pain. The seemingly differential politico-experiential realities of many worlds flowing from various selectively identified constituents (namely, individual, state, class, community, culture, civilization, etc.) are more often than not evoked as "rational grounds" for painfully politicizing a variety of gaps, rivalries, frictions, conflicts, and wars.
4. A forthright acknowledgment of the limits of the "rational grounds" of experiencing reality could imaginably create fresh political space for making an appeal to the "emotional grounds" for forging equality, companionship, cooperation, negotiation, and peace in IR.
5. An overt admittance of the fragmentations inherent in plural dualist master-/meta-narratives of reality could stimulate the theoretical-practical agenda of revealing not only the hitherto overlooked material-ideational connections across many worlds but also the hitherto ignored monist master-/meta-narratives of one world in IR.

Although the systematic spreading out of these aforementioned principles could go a long way in developing a full-fledged Sufi Global IR theory (for details, see chapter 11), it is critically important to remain attentive toward

the political receptivity of such a theory among the practitioners of Global IR. Bukhari, Ahmad, and Nyang (2012: 99) caution:

> Broadly speaking, the tone of studies of Sufism may vary from "Sufism is true," "Sufism is nice," to "Sufism is a topic worthy of study for social, historical, or any number of analytic reasons, within a humanities or social science framework." Post-9/11, a political trope emerged in American public discourse on Sufism as the "moderate" or "good" Islam but this seems to have remained largely the purview of neo-con think tanks, and government policy, rather than impacting the patronage or research agenda of academic studies in any substantive way . . . scholars interested in how Sufi ideas might speak to larger social or political issues are developing a liberatory theology of Sufi activism or "engaged Sufism" which may be associated with the idea of an emerging progressive Islam movement among scholars who are Muslim or Muslim sympathizers.

As the perplexity over political affiliations of scholars engaging with Sufi theoretical-practical explorations lingers, the philosophical dilemma of Rūmī, also uttered by Morrow (2012: 30), is likely to reverberate: "What is to be done, O Moslems? For I do not recognize myself!"

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The theories of Eurocentric IR are entrapped in the assumptions of epistemological dualism, ontological priority, and methodological compartmentalization. These assumptions, in turn, enforce naturalized strategic responses in day-to-day practice of global politics: for instance, the epistemological, ontological, and methodological gaps between human groups positioned in different parts of the globe (which lead to a false impression of living in many worlds) are purposefully projected as existential hierarchies. And, many a time, these purposefully projected existential hierarchies are further pushed to fuel unending rivalries, conflicts, and wars. Under these circumstances, an alternative imagination of a post-Western Global IR theory is possible only by outdoing these identified Eurocentric theoretical-practical assumptions and naturalized strategic responses. One such imagination is achievable through the introduction of Sufism to orthodox IR thinking. As this chapter has tried to show, a far-reaching involvement with the Sufi threefold attribute of epistemological monism, ontological immaterialism, and methodological eclecticism (also reiterated in Rūmī's poetry) could inspire a non-centric Global IR theory in a non-derivative and non-exceptionalist style. While epistemological monism could broaden Eurocentric IR by encouraging an unusual presumption of "oneness of reality," ontological immaterialism

could steer through the exteriors of Eurocentric IR by ideationally blending the visible, plural, separated, and often clashing strands of otherwise connected reality into an unknown melting point of "nothingness." Furthermore, methodological eclecticism could enable a curious assortment of rationalism, reflectivism, and extra-rationalism (or emotionalism), thereby permitting an alternative narrative of the superficially known practices of global politics. Although the intellectual engagement with Sufism is expected to cause political reservations, it is the uncharted theoretical-practical pathways of Sufism that holds the potential to resourcefully redirect contemporary global politics toward the unseen yet experiential universalist territory of "no homeland."

NOTES

1. Sufi philosophy does not promote exceptionalism. It, rather, advocates self–other assimilation. As such, Rūmī cannot be justifiably dragged into the exceptionalist/non-universalist theoretical traditions of postcolonialism and decolonialism. For a detailed debate on Sufi Islam as an antidote to Political Islam, especially the Senegalese Sufism as a political model of cooperation-, coexistence-, and toleration-based pluralism, see Leichtman (2016).

2. Sufism can inspire a "non-centric" Global IR theory as there is no scholarly consensus over its geographical-historical origins. The conventional view suggests that Sufism is the mystical school of Islam that began in the first centuries following the life of the Prophet Mohammad. Another view holds that the pre-Islamic roots of Sufism are traceable in the early Christian mystics of Syria and Egypt, to the Essenes, the ancient Pythagorean orders, and the mystery schools of the Egyptians and Zoroastrians, among others. It is broadly accepted that Sufism entered into a "Golden Age" in 1200–1500 CE, particularly in the thirteenth century, when many Sufi brotherhoods flourished. One of the first Sufi orders was the Yesevi order (named after Khwajah Ahmed Yesevi) in modern Kazakhstan. Many additional Sufi orders included the Kubrawiya order in Central Asia, the Qadiriyyah order in Iraq, the Chisti order in India, and the Mevlevi order in Turkey—the one founded by Rūmī. As Sufism evolved and as the Mongol Empire expanded from Persia through Central Asia, Sufism absorbed ideas from multiple ancient philosophical traditions such as Zoroastrianism, Vedanta, Gnosticism, Buddhism, and Shamanism. It is noteworthy that the threefold attribute of epistemological monism, ontological immaterialism, and methodological eclecticism constitutes a commonality in diverse Sufi discourses. For understanding the "assimilative" and "non-exceptionalist" philosophical aptitude of Sufism, see White (1965).

3. For a comprehensive biography of Rūmī, including an analysis of his texts and their reception in the Muslim world and the West, see Iqbal (1984), Wines (2000), and Gooch (2017).

4. Rumi married again after the death of his first wife, and had a son, Amir Alim Chalabi, and a daughter, Malakeh Khatun.

5. As volumes of new translations of Rūmī's writings get published, many scholars—such as Brad Gooch, Anne Waldman, Lee Briccetti, Coleman Barks, and Robert Bly—opine that Rūmī's global influence is likely to continue and grow in future (see Ciabattari, 2014).

6. The next two sections include modified versions of a few arguments contained in my previous work; see Shahi (2018).

7. For an in-depth discussion on different versions of dualism and monism, see Friesen (2005).

8. Referring to Rūmī in *Fīhi mā-fīhi* (the Discourses), Baldock (2005) argues that the words are useful as they instigate a search, but the object of the search cannot be apprehended through words. If it were so, there would have been no need for striving and self-annihilation. Likewise, human speech motivates the search for the meaning even if it cannot assist in seeing the meaning of reality.

9. For understanding the contrasts between the notions of *ma'rifah* and *'ilm*, see Shah-Kazemi (2002) and Fudge (2011).

10. Focusing upon the plurality of discussions on constructivism in Eurocentric IR, Mohamed Hamchi (2011) observes that the epistemological divisions among various constructivists have reproduced the same gap between two incommensurables, that is, rationalist-constructivists and reflectivist-constructivists.

11. According to Böwering (1992), Sufism considers "time" as a superior conceptual category than "space." It is so, because space is seen as nothing but an auxiliary notion that emerges from the accident of the body and time as proceeding from the soul.

12. For a critical study on the problems of methodology in approaching Sufism, see Brewster (1976).

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Part 2

DEBATING SUFI 'ONENESS OF REALITY': INSIGHTS FROM THE NON-WESTERN WORLDS

Chapter 4

The Potentials of the Sufi Idea of 'Oneness of Reality' in Global International Relations

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> *How does a part of the world leave the world? How can wetness leave water?* (Macauley, 2010)

Throughout much of human history, people have claimed to live in separated parts of the world. And some of the many factors that alienate one part of the world from another are faith, religion, and God. As a rule, people have not only plotted different routes to separated parts of the world via multiple understandings of faith, religion, and God but also witnessed wars over these matters. Individuals and groups have often used violence in the name of their deity. What has happened is that the support for one faith has often come at the dismissal of others. People have been willing to kill for their God; this sort of holy crusade[1] has brought about countless hardships and atrocities. Even those unwilling to use violence have at times tried to marginalize others with whom they disagree on matters of faith. The questions of whose religion is correct and whose God presides over the others have dominated a great deal of the conversation. While various Western and non-Western religious traditions have made efforts to comprehend God as the creator of the world, what tends to separate much of the orthodox Western thought from several non-Western modes of thinking is the notion of 'God-world duality': as per the orthodox Western monotheistic view of God, the world (including human beings) is detached from God due to 'original sin', and, therefore, the world is a fallen construct bound to observe conflicts typified through the Augustinian mindset of 'good vs. evil' (Walker, 1989); by contrast, for most of the non-Western religious traditions, either the world is capable of being merged with God (Sommer, 2009) or the world is 'Godless' (Olivelle, 2019).[2]

In the context of International Relations (IR), the orthodox Western thought (based upon God-world duality) has rationalized the pursuit of national

interests in world affairs by a biblical invocation of the fallen condition of humankind, a kind of tarnished golden rule, that overlooks the evil done unto 'others' because it is the only alternative to their doing it unto 'us' (or 'self') (Falk, 1987: 303). Unfortunately, this strategic attitude of 'good vs. evil' and 'self vs. others' – emanating from St. Augustine's considerations on the duties of Christian emperors of Rome to defend the empire (Hoover, 2015)[3] – has led so many to lose sight of the commonalities that connect humankind scattered across Westphalian divisions. Under these circumstances, the notion of 'non-duality' – often imagined as 'God-world inseparability' in diverse mystical traditions prevalent not only in non-Western worlds but also in some parts of Western worlds – emerges as a useful theoretical-practical alternative. These mystical traditions set out to surpass the iniquitous God-world duality built and fortified by classical institutional religion:[4] in order to do so, they stress the ability to directly experience God and to recognize that the tactically enforced gap between God and human beings is an illusion; as such, God and human beings (along with other created beings) essentially constitute an omnipresent 'oneness of reality'.

To begin with, the present chapter elucidates this omnipresent 'oneness of reality' (or 'unity of being') as articulated in the texts on Sufism and many other (non-)Western mystical traditions. After the 'textual analysis' of the concept of 'oneness of reality' in different mystical traditions, the chapter proceeds to suggest that the Sufi approach to 'oneness of reality' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) – which thrives upon the annihilation of 'temporal I-ness' – can be mobilized to abolish the consciousness of superficial deviations among the so-called Western and non-Western worlds, thereby fostering a more integrated discourse on Global IR. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section undertakes a conceptual study of the Sufi idea of 'oneness of reality'. The second section demonstrates how this Sufi idea of 'oneness of reality' finds parallels in Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Kabbalah within Judaism, and Christian mysticism. Finally, the third section examines the theoretical-practical implications of the Sufi idea of 'oneness of reality' for Global IR.

THE SUFI IDEA OF 'ONENESS OF REALITY': A CONCEPTUAL EXPLORATION

The term 'oneness' encompasses many possible connotations. For some, it could imply the monotheistic vision of one God, as distinct from trinitarian or polytheistic faith traditions that believe in more than one God. From a philosophical perspective, the monotheistic vision of one God resembles 'monistic

oneness', not 'non-dualistic oneness'. Distinguishing between monistic and non-dualistic oneness, Abe (2016: 10–12) comments:

> It is my contention that only non-dualistic oneness or unity, not monistic oneness or unity, may provide a real common basis for the contemporary pluralistic situation of world relations. How, then, are monistic and non-dualistic oneness different from one another? . . . [The] monistic oneness [sets] itself apart from dualistic twoness and pluralistic manyness [or, say, dualism and pluralism] . . . and, therefore, stands in opposition to them. Precisely because of this oppositional relation, however, monistic oneness is neither a singular oneness nor a truly ultimate oneness. In order to realize true oneness we must go beyond not only dualism and pluralism, but also monistic oneness . . . because at that point we are completely free from any form of duality, including the duality between monism and dualism or pluralism . . . [while] monotheistic God [situated upon monistic oneness] is somewhat 'over there', not completely right here and right now, . . . [the] non-dualistic oneness is the root-source realized right here and right now . . . [this root-source] is referred to as 'zero or non-substantial emptiness' . . . the source from which one, two, many and the systemic whole itself can emerge.

It is this non-dualistic root-source – understood as 'zero' or 'non-substantial emptiness' (also mentioned as 'non-being/non-existence/nothingness' in chapter 3) – that shapes the Sufi idea of 'oneness of reality'.[5] Ontologically, its direct experience becomes possible when one reaches a higher level of consciousness (often in love), wherein the egoistic self is annihilated (i.e., 'substantial self' is destroyed and 'non-substantial emptiness' dawns upon), thereby leaving nothing other than the feeling of 'oneness' with Divine Presence. As a complex component of Islamic mysticism, this feeling of 'oneness' with Divine Presence – usually incorporating intense emotions of 'union' and 'separation' – has been frequently communicated through a vast body of Sufi literature. Referring to a similar encounter with Divine Presence – as witnessed by the twelfth-century Islamic mystic Ruzbihan Baqli – Ernst (1997: 63–64) narrates:

> One day I fell into the oceans of longing, and the crashing of the ocean of greatness took me to the station[6] of witnessing Divine Presence. I saw the Truth (glory be to him) unveil to me. . . . I remained gazing at his beauty and was utterly intoxicated. I nearly gave up my spirit, my intellect nearly vanished, my heart nearly flew away. My conscious was annihilated, but my form remained in the ecstatic joys of witnessing him. . . . At dawn I saw the world was filled with the Truth, and *I was in a state both hidden and present, as though I saw him and as though I did not see him* (emphasis added). . . . I remained in that moment and state until sobriety arrived.[7]

Noticeably, the feeling of 'oneness' with Divine Presence is in effect non-dualistic: it is so, because the duality of 'egoistic self' and 'Divine Presence' is not permanently lost; rather, the duality of 'egoistic self' and 'Divine Presence' is both lost (hidden) and found (present). Ibn al-Arabī reiterates:

> Though He [i.e. God/*Allah*] can be found everywhere, He is also nowhere to be found. He/not He. He is *wujūd* . . . [or] "Being" . . . Being is no way divorced from [human] consciousness, from a fully aware finding, perception, and knowledge of the ontological situation. . . . [While] Being is in no sense ambiguous or questionable, the [human] understanding of Being is something else again. . . . Being is that which truly [exists], while everything else [including human understanding of Being] dwells in fog and haziness . . . as a thing pertains to existence, so also it lies in the grasp of existence's opposite, non-existence . . . [thus] every existent thing [*mawjūd*] [including human being] is at one and the same time He (Being) and not He (not-being, absolute nothingness). (Chittick, 1989: 6–7)

But then, why is Being both hidden and present (not ever-present) for whoever goes through this momentary feeling of oneness with Divine Presence (or absolute nothingness)? There are two reasons. First, the Desire of Being (God) to be seen/known by God's creation; as the famous Hadith states, God, in answering David about the reason for creation, said: 'I was a hidden treasure, and I wanted to be known, so I created the world. . . . [It is] the sadness of the primordial solitude that makes Him yearn to be revealed' (Corbin, 1997: 184). Second, the Desire of the creature for God, or, in fact, the 'Sight of God Himself epiphanized in beings (or creatures) and yearning to return to Himself' (Corbin, 1997: 147). Thus, there exists a compulsory hidden/present non-dualistic link between 'Being' (Divine Presence) and 'Being/not-being' (egoistic self).

So, how does this hidden/present non-dualistic link between 'Being' (Divine Presence) and 'Being/not-being' (egoistic self) structures a holistic 'oneness of reality'? Since every egoistic self has the same hidden/present non-dualistic relationship with Divine Presence, the overall reality gets translated into a 'unity of being' or 'unity of existence' (*waḥdat al-wujūd*): all that is created (i.e. 'Being/non-being') pre-existed in God's knowledge and will return to it, making mystical union with God (i.e. 'Being') possible. But there is a difference between the concepts of 'unity of being/*waḥdat al-wujūd*' and 'unity of vision/*wahdat al-shuhud*': the former implies the reality of non-dualistic link between egoistic self and Divine Presence, whereas the latter denotes the act of witnessing the reality of non-dualistic link between egoistic self and Divine Presence. Ibn al-Arabī simplifies:

> There is nothing that moves the creatures [or egoistic self] . . . except the hope of obtaining the station of witnessing (*maqām al-shuhūd*), for this is the desired finding (*al-wujūd*). . . . Abū Yazīd asked his Lord: 'My Lord, by what means

> can I draw near to You?', to which He replied: 'By something that I do not possess'. He asked: 'O Lord, what is it that You do not possess, when everything belongs to You?' and He answered: 'Lowliness and neediness'. He then came to know what belongs to the selfhood (*aniyya*, 'I-ness') of the Real ['Being'] and what belongs to the selfhood of the [egoistic self, i.e., 'Being/non-Being']. Thereafter he entered into this station, attaining the most perfect nearness, and thus bringing together *shuhūd* and *wujūd*. (Aladdin, 2012)[8]

The I-ness of egoistic self is departed from the I-ness of the Real (i.e., Divine Presence). And, therefore, the I-ness of egoistic self has to be annihilated (destroyed) in order to witness the I-ness of the Real. The key, therefore, is for the egoistic self to be 'awakened'. As Chittick (1989: 30) explains:

> [The 'awakened' egoistic self] lives fully and consciously on all the levels of the descent through which light becomes separate from Light and on all the levels of the ascent through which light retraces its steps and human intelligence rejoins divine knowledge [Light]. [As such], he is the part and the Whole, the many and the One.

It is this view of 'One and many' that most aptly conveys the idea of 'oneness of reality' in Sufism: the Reality of 'One' (God/*Allah*) is diffused into 'many' (multiplicity of egoistic self); but when 'many' deeply gaze at each other (creation/world), they end up witnessing nothing but the 'One' (God/*Allah*). Sheikh Badruddin remarks: 'O seeker, know that the path to Truth is within you. You are the traveler. Going happens by itself. Coming happens to you, without you. There is no arriving or leaving. . . . Who is there to be with God? What is there other than God? Who seeks and finds when there is none but God?' (Fadiman and Frager, 1997: 198).[9] When egoistic self begins to contemplate the nature of reality, and what existed prior to the creation of the world as we know it, its lowly/needy I-ness steadily elevates and ultimately reaches a unified level of consciousness: at this unified level of consciousness, the lowly/needy I-ness of egoistic self gets annihilated (*fana*) and the I-ness of the Real (One) gets revealed to it. Nevertheless, even when the Real (One) gets revealed to it, the egoistic self continues to physically subsist as one among the many forms of this world. It is important to investigate how this Sufi idea of 'oneness of reality' – that is, the view of 'One and many' – is closely related to several other non-Western (and even Western) mystical traditions.

THE SUFI IDEA OF 'ONENESS OF REALITY': ECHOES IN OTHER (NON-)WESTERN MYSTICAL TRADITIONS

Even at the beginning of the twenty-first century, it is still suspected that – among other factors – individuals have also used religious differences as

pretexts for conflict. Nonetheless, a systematic survey discloses that the so-called different religions (practised in so-called different worlds) every so often recommend comparable ways of approaching reality: in so doing, these religions might not share entirely identical world views, yet they do meet with each other with regard to specific aspects of reality. In what follows, an attempt has been made to show how the vision of 'oneness of reality' – based upon the annihilation of temporal I-ness – is central to not only Sufism but also a few other mystical traditions, namely, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, and Christian mysticism.

Hinduism

Among the six recognized schools of Hindu philosophy – that is, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśesika, Pūrva-Mimāsa, and Vedānta (Clear, 1998) – it is the 'Advaita' Vedānta (literally meaning 'non-dual' or 'non-second') that envisages a 'oneness of reality' that ties the perceiver and the perceived together with a single hidden connectedness or *Brahman*.

Ho (1995: 124) comments:

> The Advaita monistic doctrine states that there is one, and only one, reality called the *Brahman*: ubiquitous, absolute, formless, immaterial, immutable, without any attributes, and hence ineffable.

In fact, Advaita hierarchically arranges the experience of perceived reality along three levels of being (Deutsch, 1968): (1) Reality (*Brahman*), that is, the ultimate monist experience of 'oneness of being'; (2) Appearance (*jagat*), that is, the dualistic experience of 'multiplicity of being'; and (3) Unreality (*tuchchha*), that is, 'non-being' as the utter non-reality which can never be a content of experience. The three layers of ontological reality – that is, 'oneness of being', 'multiplicity of being', and 'non-being' – are not mutually disconnected. Rather, the 'oneness of being' (*Brahman*) is hidden beneath the 'multiplicity of being' (*jagat*). As such, the apparent 'multiplicity of being' (*jagat*), with its compatible or incompatible diversities and dualities, does not cease to exist (Shahi, 2018): it only has a lesser perceived level of 'ambiguous reality' (incomplete and distorted reality) that exists with *Brahman* (or 'oneness') at its root (Brooks, 1969). As such, Advaita does not teach duality; it only assumes it in order to later remove it (Potter, 1981): when the dualistic experience of 'multiplicity of being' (or many-ness) is modified, and the dualistic separation of 'I-ness' and 'You-ness' is removed, the monist experience of 'oneness of being' (or 'oneness of reality') becomes reachable (Indich, 1995).[10]

Buddhism

Although Buddhism rejects the Vedantic notion of *Brahman*, its support for the vision of 'oneness of reality' is traced in the notion of *Pratītya-samutpāda* (literally meaning 'dependent co-origination'). Abe (2016: 137) illustrates:

> Rejecting the age-old Vedantic notion of *Brahman* as the sole reality underlying the phenomenal world, Gautam Buddha advanced the teaching of *Pratītya-samutpāda*, that is, dependent co-origination in which everything in and out of the universe, without exception is interdependent, co-arising and co-ceasing, and nothing exists independently. Even the ultimate does not exist by itself. Rather, this complete interdependency itself among everything in the universe is understood as 'ultimate Reality' in Buddhism, It is called, 'not one, not two' because it is neither monotheistic nor dualistic . . . [it, rather, accepts] *sūnyatā* i.e. emptiness as the ultimate Reality.

In fact, *sūnyatā* (i.e., emptiness as the ultimate Reality) is related to the thought of *anātma* [no-self] as both are expressions of 'dependent co-origination' (Streng, 1967): when the awareness of 'no-self' comes through after the *nirvāna* (or 'blowing off' of the empirical self or phenomenal I-ness), the 'radical emptying of things' occurs, thereby delineating the existential situation that allows the ultimate Reality to be apprehended. Suzuki (1935: 51) concludes: 'Pursue not the outer entanglements, dwell not in the inner void, be serene in the oneness of things, and [dualism] vanishes by itself'.

Taoism

Taoism (also known as Daoism) imagines the 'oneness of reality' as a transcendental unity called *Dao* (literally meaning 'the Way'). Like *Brahman* in Advaita, the *Dao* is devoid of definition, determination, form, name, attributes, and qualities. Basically, *Dao* means both 'going beyond multiplicity (*xiantian/*pre-celestial)' and the 'origin of multiplicity (*houtian/*post-celestial)' (Pregadio, 2017). As per Taoism, the interpersonal harmonies among multiplicity can be created if one understands and modifies the deviance from *Dao* and recreates the connection with *Dao* (Lao Tzu, 1954). This is so, because *Dao* – as the ultimate transcendental unity – continuously regulates and governs all the interactions between oppositional entities embedded in worldly multiplicity, including the interactions between 'human self' and 'human other', or interactions between 'human self' and 'environmental other' (Sun, 2006). When *Dao* is interpreted within the realm of multiplicity, it implies the principle of 'unity of opposites'. And when *Dao* is interpreted beyond the realm of multiplicity, it depicts a 'nothingness' or 'pure potentiality' from

which all things (including oppositional entities) come forth (Ornatowski, 1997). Only a 'perfect man' – that is, a 'selfless man' – can go beyond multiplicity and witness *Dao* as 'nothingness'. Ho (1995: 120) asserts: 'The perfect man becomes a sage in tranquility and a king in activity. . . . The perfect man [or Taoist sage-king] has no self [or this-worldly I-ness]; the spiritual man has no achievement, the true sage has no name'.

Jewish Mysticism: Kabbalah

To Jewish mystics, the 'oneness of reality' – as embodied in God – opens up as *Ein Sof* (literally meaning the 'Infinite' or 'Endless'). *Ein Sof* is sometimes also referred to as 'nothingness' (*Ayin*). Elucidating the nature of this 'nothingness' in Kabbalah tradition, Matt (2009: 7–8) states:

> [Nothingness or] *Ayin* is more existent than all the beings of the world. But since it is simple, and every simple thing is complex compared with its simplicity, it is called *Ayin*. [*Ayin* is] the primal state, God [as *Ein Sof*] is undifferentiated thing, neither this, nor that, no-thingness.

Since *Ein Sof* causes everything to be, there is nothing that is not pervaded by it. If things were not pervaded by it, *Ein Sof* would be limited, subject to duality. But that is not the case. Everything that exists in the world, first exists within God; nonetheless, what we perceive in this world is imperfect, whereas the source of what we perceive in this world is a quality that exists within God in its most perfect/pure form (Ariel, 2006). The cosmos – that grew out of this pure form – began as one and gave rise to two, and to many. So the task of the seekers of reality is to join the many, the two, back into one, that is, to first fully express one's individuality (egoistic self), and then to fully express one's transcendentality (spiritual self), thereby recognizing oneself and other/s as two finite expressions of the one infinite. In fact, the one infinite (or Infinite Reality as *Ein Sof*) preserves both the differentiated/finite individual egoistic self, and the unity between the differentiated/finite individual egoistic self, thereby compelling one to think about how the 'surface diversity conceals the underlying unity' (Levi, 2009). Finally, it is the 'withdrawal' of the egoistic self (i.e. finite I-ness) that leaves space for its 'emanation' and the subsequent realization of the one Infinite Reality (Matt, 2009).

Christian Mysticism

Christian mysticism revolves around the doctrine of Trinity, that is, the unity of 'Father' (the Creator), 'Son' (the Incarnated), and 'Holy Spirit' (the

Intercessor) in one Godhead. This doctrine of Trinity confirms a Neoplatonic understanding of 'oneness of reality' wherein everything begins and ends with One, which is the First and Final Cause and in its richness diffuses itself in creation. Meister Eckhart – who was one of the most noted Christian mystics among others, such as Margaret Porette, Johannes Tauler, Nicholas of Cusa, St. John of the Cross, and Teresa of Avila – explains the complex relationship between God and creation as follows: 'From eternity, the One simmers into Trinity, which boils over into creation in a movement from Oneness to multiplicity . . . [the] creation [then] surges back through the trinity and dissolves into the One. . . . [As such], God is never frozen as One or Three or creation, but in one and the same action God is dialectically One and breaking down into the persons of the Trinity, and flowing forth into creation (Lamm, 2017: 341–342). Thus, when one awakens to God, one awakens oneself to beyond oneself (Egan, 2010): in other words, the mystical experience of God generates a feeling of being "carried away" beyond oneself [or beyond one's ordinary I-ness]' (Pike, 1992).

Undoubtedly, the recognition of reality as 'oneness' which, in turn, puts forward a plea to transcend the worldly I-ness is not peculiar to Sufism. The next section probes how this plea to transcend the worldly I-ness – flowing from Sufism and reinforced by numerous other mystical traditions practised across the globe – could add to the existing theoretical-practical understanding of Global IR.

THE SUFI IDEA OF 'ONENESS OF REALITY' IN GLOBAL IR: SOME THEORETICAL-PRACTICAL INFERENCES

How could the vision of 'oneness of reality' (or the Sufi idea of 'One and many') theoretically and practically enrich Global IR? The academic discipline of IR has come a long way from the Westphalian presumption of 'separating religion from politics' (Wilson et al., 2013) to the post-Westphalian realization of the 'return of the religion' (Faye and Haynes, 2018) or 'turn to the religion' (Kubalkova, 2013). Since religion was the main cause of the Thirty Years' War in European history, the Peace of Westphalia sought to encourage secular politics that could remove religious arguments from public domain. However, the 'Westphalian myth' – functioning upon modern European notion of religion as 'individual/personal beliefs', not 'communal/public arguments' (Cho and Katzenstein, 2011) – got exposed. Also the secular political aspirations to discard religion as 'irrational' and 'dogmatic' practices (Laski, 1923) got shattered. Religion continued to retain its existence in the post-secular world (Taylor, 2007). Not surprisingly, the scholarly appeals were made to abstain from subordinating 'religious reason' to 'secular

reason' (Habermas, 2010). In fact, the theoretical shifts in studying the role of religion in IR have been substantiated by practical eventualities of global politics. Nate Breznau et al. (2011) informs:

> Religion continues to influence society and politics. For example, voting in most advanced societies is more closely tied to religion than to socioeconomics (Evans and Kelley, 2004) . . . apostates are less likely to be politically conservative and more likely to oppose religion in politics (Hout and Fischer, 2002) . . . and religious fundamentalists, taking religion to horrific extremes, fomented recent bombings in New York City, London, and Madrid (Friesen, 2007). Religion also shapes foreign policy and cultural conflicts (Haynes, 2008). . . . Far from fading away, religions are resurgent . . . as seen in the religious revolution in Iran (Habermas, 2006), conflict over constitutional Islam in Afghanistan (Olesen, 2002), and strong religious voices in right-wing parties in the United States and Western Europe (Norris, 2004).

Given the centrality of religion in the practice of contemporary global politics, religion has come to be willingly or unwillingly embraced as a crucial theme in IR study. But then, even if it is admitted that the exclusion of religious forms of reasoning from public discourse could result in producing a theoretically impoverished position (Calhoun, 2011), the key theoretical paradigms in IR not only refrain from considering 'religion' in their analysis of political subjects but also underestimate 'religious thoughts' as a resource for political theorization[11] (Wilson, 2012). What's more, the dominant macro-level notion of religion within more traditional IR theories continues to be limited to dualism (Wilson, 2010), that is, the same 'Augustinian God-world duality' whereby God is separated from human beings, and human beings are separated from each other. As such, despite the theoretical-practical swing from secularism to post-secularism, the very idea of religion in conventional IR theories remains the same. While the reintegration of the same idea of religion (i.e., 'Augustinian God-world duality') defines the core limitation of conventional IR theories, the key questions for Global IR are these: How could religion be reinvented as a progressive source for the 'struggle for the soul of the twenty-first century' (Thomas, 2005), or how could 'religious worldviews provide better frameworks for approaching fundamental socio-political questions about freedom, equality, democracy and justice' in global politics? (Wilson et al., 2013). It is in the context of these questions that the Sufi idea of 'oneness of reality' bears particular significance.

Since the Sufi idea of 'oneness of reality' is non-dualistic, it does not take for granted the unavoidable separation between God and human beings, or human beings and human beings. It, rather, generates a fresh picture of God as a non-dualistic source – that is, 'zero or nothingness' – that manifests into this world as we know it: as such, irrespective of the divergence in religious,

political, and other geo-cultural identities, the human beings (as inhabitants of the world and as bearers of the epiphany of that original non-dualistic source) are gifted in terms of their ability to experience the hidden oneness (read connectedness) that binds the superficially separated parts of the globe. As human beings are gifted in terms of their ability to experience the hidden oneness that binds the superficially separated parts of the globe, they are also capable of unitedly acting for the purpose of protecting the naturally (and also spiritually) undivided globe. Since the image of a divided globe largely rides on divisive religious, political, and other geo-cultural identities, and these divisive religious, political, and other geo-cultural identities are, in turn, closely tied to the temporal I-ness of human beings, Sufism makes a call to revisit this temporal I-ness as a made-up construct that basically needs to be annihilated/destroyed.

In contemporary global politics – wherein the notion of separated 'self' or 'ego' is already a neuroscientifically established illusion (Metzinger, 2010; Hood, 2013) – the Sufi vision of oneness in many-ness can revolutionize the habitual understandings of political identities and the issues of global politics that are associated with political identities, for example, human rights, gender rights, multiculturalism, climate change, and politics of knowledge. While more traditional theories of IR readily accept that global politics is operationalized through political identities that are relational, fluid, constructed, and multiple (Goff, 2004), a Global IR inspired by Sufi vision of 'oneness in many-ness' can argue that the political identities are indeed relational, fluid, constructed, and multiple, yet these political identities (i.e. temporal I-ness) can be subdued in order to theorize and practise a new kind of global politics that is less motivated by 'mind-based identitarian multiplicity' and more motivated by 'heart-based non-identitarian unity/oneness' (Baskal, 2010).

Although the theoretical prospects of Sufism in Global IR seem quite promising, one needs to be cautious about its 'practical' repercussions: evidently, some governments get engaged with the idea of 'sponsoring Sufism' in global politics only because that could help in forging strategic affiliations with Sufi orders; since Sufism is widely seen as an 'apolitical movement', the strategic affiliations with Sufi orders could grant these governments the much-needed 'religious credibility', something they seek as they face the rise of Islamist parties. Fait Muedini (2015: 3) warns:

> [One can investigate] the cases of Algeria, Morocco, Pakistan, Russia, Uzbekistan, Britain, and . . . think-tanks in the United States to illustrate exactly how and why leaders and other actors are sponsoring (and supporting) Sufism. . . . In many (but not all) of the cases, [this is done] with an intent not only to combat extremism but also out of a perception that Sufism is not concerned with politics

> . . . the governments [that have the perception that Sufism is not concerned with politics] have been rather unwilling to provide genuine political and civil reforms [based upon the non-dualistic tenets of Sufism despite their strategic affiliation with Sufi orders]. . . . This issue has received increased attention with the Arab uprisings, with many scholars examining government responses as to whether these states would actually provide genuine reform. . . . Sufi groups are not just being 'used' by the state. They [i.e. Sufi groups] also benefit from relationships with the state.

Needless to say, such activities of sponsoring Sufism by state governments are rhetorical. If the relevance of Sufism in Global IR is assessed on the basis of these activities of sponsoring Sufism, then it would most certainly be a theoretical as well as a practical blunder.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The conventional understanding of the role of religion in international (or global) politics is heavily influenced by the impressions of Eurocentric classical institutional religion. When European history faced challenges from the political perversions of this classical institutional religion, the modern secular political discourse was designed with an intention to confine religion to private/personal domain and to prevent its entrance in public/political domain. However, when this tactic proved to be naive because religion refuted to withdraw from the public domain, a whole new post-secular discourse was manufactured to confess the failure to dump religion and to stress the need to productively interweave religion and politics. But this post-secular initiative to productively interweave religion and politics is also constrained as it still sticks to the same idea of classical institutional religion – a product of ancient, modern, and post-modern Europe. As international politics has acquired 'Global' dimensions, it is a theoretical as well as practical imperative that the academic discipline of IR familiarizes itself with alternative (read non-Eurocentric and a few denigrated Eurocentric non-dualistic) traditions of religion. One such tradition of religion, as this chapter has tried to disclose, is Sufism. Sufism and its vision of reality – that encourage the annihilation of temporal I-ness so that the oneness in many-ness could become reachable – are enthusiastically supported by various other non-Western and Western mystical traditions. Since this Sufi vision of reality – that is, oneness in many-ness – is enthusiastically supported by a wide range of non-Western and Western mystical traditions, it could facilitate an alternative approach to the theory and practice of Global IR.

NOTES

1. Although many scholars consider the term 'holy crusade' as Eurocentric (or relevant to a specific period of time in European history), it is pertinent to recall that the term recently got momentum when not only the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks presented it as 'jihad', or Islamic holy war against Christians and Jews (Wedgwood, 2002), but also the then US president George W. Bush reiterated the same spirit by using the word 'crusade' with its connotations of a Christian holy war against Muslims (Acharya, 2002).

2. In Western philosophical tradition, Nietzsche's nihilism (or disbelief in 'truth-claims') announces God as dead before sarcastically interrogating whether men must themselves become Gods simply to appear worthy of it (Nietzsche, 2001). Nonetheless, Nietzsche's nihilism neither suggests a Godless origin of the world, nor foresees a potential conflation of 'other-worldly God' with 'this-worldly men'.

3. Explaining the linkage between religious and geo-political factors of 'Just Wars', Hoover (2015) argues: 'Just War theory has its roots in St. Augustine's reflections on the duties of the Christian emperors of Rome to defend the empire. International law developed as a way of justly dividing the world between sovereign states and savage peoples in need of civilization during the era of European colonialism, and human rights have taken center stage since the end of the Cold War, as the global influence of the United States reached its peak. Today, ethics [including the notion of 'Just War'] are seen as a central part of the study of international relations'.

4. According to Scholem (1995), the key function of classical institutional religion is to destroy the dream-harmony between human beings, universe, and God, that is, to isolate human beings from other elements of the dream stage of primitive consciousness, thereby constructing a vast abyss between human beings (as finite creatures), transcendental Being (as universe), and God (as the infinite being). It is mysticism that challenges the classical institutional religion that misleadingly solidifies an ever-present consciousness of fundamental duality (or bipolarity) between God and human beings.

5. At this point, it is important to declare that this chapter uses miscellaneous labels, such as *Allah*, *Brahman*, *Sūnyatā*, *Dao*, and *Ein Sof*, to refer to the varied philosophical interpretations of the same idea of 'oneness of reality', that is, 'One and many'. Since the Sufi idea of 'oneness of reality' supposes that all visible dualities/pluralities can be explained in terms of a single originating point (or a single substance called 'zero' or 'non-substantial emptiness'), it surely subscribes to epistemological monism.

6. In the Sufi path of unfolding Reality, each level of human consciousness is called a 'station'. For an in-depth analysis of each station, see Angha (2010).

7. Paul Smith (2012) describes how the famous fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafiz witnessed a similar glimpse of Divine Presence in the beauty of his 'beloved'.

8. For scholarly debates on relative appropriateness of the concepts of 'unity of being/*wahādat al-wujūd*' and 'unity of vision/*wahādat al shuhūd*', see Ansari (1998).

9. In a similar vein, Nesimi writes: 'You who look everywhere, the Truth trying to see, inside yourself is the Truth, yes . . . inside you it be!' (Smith, 2014: 80); and

Asik Veysel writes: 'I hide Your beauty in my eye. Whatever I look at, there You are' (Ferraro, 2007: 25). However, according to some Sufi scholars like Rūmī, the Truth (or beauty) that the seeker tries to see can either be an 'aid' or a 'roadblock': to be sure, the 'derivative beauty' of egoistic self is the closest thing to the 'True Beauty' of God; but, it is only when the seeker sees this 'derivative beauty' as a reflection of the 'True Beauty' that the seeker can use this derivative beauty as an aid (and avoid this derivative beauty as a roadblock).

10. For a comprehensive study on how the ancient Indian philosophy of Advaita can inspire a Global IR theory, see Shahi (2018)

11. Although the dominant theoretical frameworks of 'realism' and 'liberalism' remain somewhat sceptical towards the utility of 'religious thoughts' for understanding IR, Alexander Wendt's 'social constructivism' is less hesitant to bring in 'religious belief-systems' as valid variables for IR study. Explaining how 'social constructivism' can study the influence of religious ideas/actors on major political outcomes in world politics, Menchik (2017: 28–29) argues: 'Under what conditions are sectarian polemics and identifications likely to emerge, or diminish? How are transnational affections manufactured and maintained in the digital age? How do subnational political institutions govern religion? What are the implications of religious governance for human rights, public health, economic development, corruption, and democratic consolidation? How might the religious virtues of brotherhood, generosity, and opposition to greed be harnessed in the political struggle against economic inequality? How can public religious organizations help strengthen social solidarities and democratic political institutions? Constructivists are well placed to address these questions and further contribute to the revival of scholarship on religion and politics'.

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Chapter 5

Sufism and the Preservation of Syrian Spiritual Identity

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> *Come, whoever you are . . . come even if you have broken your vows a thousand times*. (Husain, 2018)

The new global presence of Sufism has unleashed a lot of unanswered questions: Is Sufism restricted to some notion of Islamic mysticism that remains at the level of poetic utterance or philosophical discourse – that is, at the level of 'ideal' rather than at the level of 'reality' as lived and experienced by Muslims over centuries (Sabri, 2018)? If Sufism is not restricted to the level of ideal, and if it extends to the level of reality as 'Political Sufism' (El-Sharif, 2018), then is it a 'positive branding of religious soft power' (Philippon, 2018) meant to defend Islam against extremism, or support despotism against democracy, or perhaps both (Piraino and Sedgwick, 2019)? How can one consider Sufism as apolitical if it pushes 'anti-colonial resistance' against totalitarian attempts to kill pluralism (Muedini, 2015)? And if Sufism's journey from mystical to political is nothing but a 'celebration of pluralism' (or plural religious identities) (Geoffroy, 2018), then how is Sufism instrumental in blending this celebration of pluralism with the idea of hidden oneness? In other words, if Sufism's imagination of 'oneness of reality' (or 'unity of being') is dependent upon the knowledge of the 'hidden' *('ilm al-ghayb*) (also discussed as 'zero' or 'nothingness' in chapters 3 and 4), and if this knowledge of the 'hidden' is purportedly accessible to religious dignitaries (Sorgenfrei, 2018), then is Sufism a call for raising the public profile of religious dignitaries, many of whom already enjoy a high level of social and political prominence and influence? Or is Sufism an appeal for the promotion of a particular kind of socio-religious ethics through the public education system (Sabri, 2018)? Finally, does Sufism transform national and international

politics, or does Sufism get transformed 'under the impact of national and international politics' (Raudvere and Stenberg, 2008)?

The present chapter probes these unanswered questions by diagnosing the test case of Syria. With regard to the Syrian uprising of the 1980s–1990s, this chapter describes how the 'expressive groups' of Damascene Sufis, unlike the 'instrumentalist groups' of Salafi jihadists, initiated a series of interfaith/inter-sect interactions that continue to make concrete efforts towards the protection of Syrian spiritual identity. Tentatively, the expressive groups are involved in psychologization of world religions/sects for purposes of reflexive and expansive cultivation of the self, whereas the instrumentalist groups are inclined towards power-control within the New Age Movement reflecting individualism or neoliberal ideologies of predatory capitalism (St John, 2004). This chapter examines how Sufi expressive groups, as they get involved in psychologization of world religions/sects for purposes of reflexive and expansive cultivation of the self, can operate as an effective model of 'oneness of reality' (or 'unity of being') in global politics. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section records the origins and characteristics of the Syrian uprising of the 1980s–1990s. The second section explains the fourfold strategy that continues to shape the Sufi campaign to reclaim Syria in the aftermath of the uprising. And the third section not only discusses the challenges faced by this Sufi campaign but also evaluates the general value of Sufi praxis in contemporary global politics.

THE SYRIAN UPRISING: A CLASH OF RELIGIOUS SENSIBILITIES

The story of the Syrian uprising was initially the story of a conflict between two very different visions of Syria. The young protesters had their own slogans, songs, and eventually, their own flag. It didn't take long, however, for this conflict to take on religious dimensions, or, more specifically, 'religious sensibility' dimensions. To use Gordon and Babchuk's terms, the more the conflict became militarized, the more the opposition became dominated by religious groups that were highly 'instrumentalist' in nature, that is, 'Salafi jihadist'. This, in turn, alienated religious groups that were far more 'expressive' in nature, that is, 'Sufi'.[1] The Salafi jihadist instrumentalist groups were created to achieve a specific purpose – precisely, the defeat of the Syrian regime. By contrast, the Sufi expressive groups were formed to focus on activities such as spiritual meditation (*zikr*) and worship sessions (*'ibadah*) that seemed somewhat indifferent to what was taking place politically, but, to be sure, had tangible strategic repercussions. Even today, the instrumentalist groups regard the expressive groups as appeasing the very forces they are

attempting to overthrow, and the expressive groups view the instrumentalist groups as reducing Islam to a political objective – a dangerous calculation since its failure implies the very failure of Islam.[2]

This particular clash of religious sensibilities in Syria is not new. It has its roots in the 1980s when the Muslim Brotherhood insurgency was opposed by Grand Mufti, Shaikh Ahmad Kaftaru (1915–2004), who was also the master of the Naqshbandi Sufi order in Damascus.[3] Hinnebusch and Zintl (2015: 10 and 159) report:

> [Syria's] Ba'th regime developed an ambivalent relationship with Syria's Islamist milieu, traditionally the strongest concentration of opposition to it that had mounted a major insurrection in the early 1980s. . . . Hafez al-Asad [as the president of the regime] struck an alliance with moderate Sufi Islam, notably through the appointment of Ahmad Kaftaru as Grand Mufti, which enabled Kaftaru to expand his Sufi order and his [Abu] al-Nur Institute in Damascus. Also, Muhammad Sa'id al-Buti, a moderate Islam preacher with a wide following who opposed Muslim Brotherhood attacks on the Ba'th [regime] . . . played a vital role in bridging the gap between the Sunni community and the regime, and, in return, was given exceptional access to the media. . . . The Syrian government [adopted the strategy to] accuse [the insurgents] of being militant Salafis or the members of the Muslim Brothers . . . this strategy succeeded in creating sectarian mistrust and hostility among some sectors of 'Alawite and Christian communities, as well as among Sunni Muslims, fuelling the radicalization of religious identities that has defined the Syrian conflict after 2012.

By the early 1990s, the Muslim Brotherhood insurgency and its immediate consequences were over and Kaftaru, along with all those who supported his Sufi vision, faced the challenge of protecting Syria's spiritual identity and healing the societal wounds that had resulted from the insurgency and the overwhelming violence the regime had used to crush it. Paulo Pinto (2003: 4–5) observes:

> Despite the secular institutional framework of the Ba'th regime, the fact that Hafez al-Asad, who occupied the presidency from 1970 to 2000, was a member of the Alawi sect [which is an offshoot of Shia Islam] made the regime to be perceived as sectarian to many Sunni Muslims. In fact Asad's rise to power was accompanied by an overrepresentation of Alawis in key positions of the party and the regime, such as in the security forces. . . . The traditional commercial, industrial and agrarian elites were badly affected by the economic measures of the Ba'th regime – for instance, the nationalization of industries and land reform – and became the main focus of political resistance against it. The traditional elites had strong social and familial links with various sectors of the Sunni religious establishment, such as the 'Muslim Brotherhood' or Sufi communities, allowing them to capitalize on the discontent against the regime in both religious

> and political terms. . . . After the Ba'th regime took repressive measures against the secular political organizations, the Islamic groups [also known as 'Islamic Front'] became the major force still active in the opposition to the regime. The lack of channels for political expression made Islamic opposition more and more radicalized and led to violent actions against state agents and members of the Alawi community, which were invariably followed by repressive measures taken by the state [or regime].

In the beginning, a few Sufi leaders were also involved in the armed resistance against the regime. As a result, the Syrian regime targeted those Sufi leaders and disbanded their communities: the murder of the *shaikh al-mashaykh* of the Rifa'iyya in Aleppo substantiated this point (De Jong, 1986). In 1982, the cycle of violence culminated in armed confrontations between the Syrian state and the Islamic militants. These armed confrontations ended with the military defeat of the Islamic militants and the massacre of over 20,000 civilians in Hama (Abd-Allah, 1983; Batatu, 1988). Since then, more than three decades have passed. Yet one appears to be approaching a new phase in Syria's tragedy. A phase where the killing has significantly decreased, but those responsible for the regime's brutality appear to be even more empowered – a scene highly reminiscent of Syria during the post-insurgency phase of the 1980s. No doubt, there are very important differences between these two historical moments. Nevertheless, there are important common elements that need to be captured, contextualized, and recast as a conceptual framework for how Syria, its spiritual identity in particular, can be protected. The lessons, and limitations that may be derived from this phase are instructive, particularly for the scholarly endeavour to identify how Sufism can soften sharp politico-religious identities with an objective to heal post-conflict societies, thereby also instilling the model of 'oneness of reality/unity of being' in domestic and international politics. The pages that follow aspire to achieve this task.

THE SUFI CAMPAIGN: AN EXPERIMENT WITH FOURFOLD STRATEGY

February 1982 marked the beginning of the end of Muslim Brotherhood insurgency but various manifestations of the insurgency persisted until at least 1985.[4] The designation of a new prime minister, Mahmud al-Zu'bi, in 1990 marked the beginning of a new phase, and it is in 1990 that we can begin to speak of a Sufi campaign to reclaim the country (Mansur, 2012). The campaign was subtle, as all things Sufi generally are, yet extensive. The fourfold strategy that underpins the experience of this Sufi campaign is as follows.

Infusing a Flood of Spiritual Education

If one was to identify a trademark for how Sufism interacts with society, 'moral education' would have to be one of the prime candidates. Organizing *durus*, or lessons, in mosques and homes and seeking to attract the highest number of men and women to attend these lessons is how Sufism comes to life in a Muslim society.[5] The lessons are the vehicle through which new relationships are developed between the *shaikh* (male Sufi teacher) or *shaikha* (female Sufi teacher) and those who regularly attend these lessons. Over time, a network of teachers and students is built, and, if one holds the assumptions of Sufism to be accurate, societal reform is achieved (Habash, 1996). The irony is that the lessons remain important irrespective of the attainment (or non-attainment) of societal reform, a feature peculiar to Sufi expressive groups: indeed, the mere attendance of such lessons carries a moral value that makes everything else superfluous. According to Sufi literature, a city within which many *durus* take place is a city that is worthy of divine protection. Amidst the darkness of this world, these *durus* constitute circles of light that are both blessed and protected by God (Riyad, 2005).

One would have expected that the post-insurgency phase in Syria would be characterized by a government-sponsored secularization programme. Instead, one of the fascinating aspects of Syria in the 1990s was the numerous Sufi-styled lessons that were held in mosques and homes. The various Sufi groups that had opposed the insurgency suddenly realized that they were in a position to advance their own agenda and organize more lessons than they had in a very long time. The operational headquarters of this phenomenon was the Abu al-Nur complex where Grand Mufti Kaftaru held his own lesson every Friday morning (Habash, 1996). So important were these lessons to the Grand Mufti that sources relate that when his son and spiritual heir, Zaher Kaftaru, was killed in February 1979 (allegedly as part of a Muslim Brotherhood plot), the Syrian government made it clear that it was willing to compensate him for his son's death in any way he deemed appropriate. The Grand Mufti's response was only to request the freedom to organize more *durus* and to establish religious schools (Mansur, 2012). Anecdotal as the story may indeed be, it accurately illustrates just how important the *durus* were to Sufi leaders. The Grand Mufti's disciples, in turn, preached in various mosques in central and rural Damascus. Almost immediately, even those who did not regard Kaftaru in favourable terms understood that Kaftaru's alliance with the Syrian government during the insurgency had resulted in creating an environment that allowed all those religious leaders who did not take a hostile position against the government to conduct their lessons all over Syria (Pierret, 2013). These lessons still had to be sanctioned by security officers and, no doubt, continued to be monitored by them, but since the vast majority avoided

a radical political discourse on principle, the number of lessons held continued to grow and so did the numbers of those attending them. Lessons held by female Sufi teachers took place at homes until a decree in 2005 allowed them to hold their lessons publicly in mosques (Hamidi, 2006).

What exactly, however, did this proliferation of lessons achieve in so far as the healing of post-insurgency Syria is concerned? In responding to this question, one would have to differentiate between how Sufi teachers would respond, and what can be empirically documented. Because the 1980s involved a conflict between the Syrian government and its opponents who had carried out their actions in the name of Islam, the danger lies in how a triumphant government will react to future manifestations of Islam in Syrian society once it has defeated those opponents. The *durus* are the medium through which the government channelized the future manifestations of Islam in Syrian society, and the fact that these *durus*, which aim to preserve Syrian spiritual identity, have not only survived the insurgency but have actually increased in number in the 1990s is sufficient, in accordance with Sufi logic, to vindicate what has been achieved. On a more empirical level, various studies have documented that a process of Islamization, both Sufi and otherwise, did indeed take place from 1990 onwards. As with any such process, it would not be difficult to point out aspects that were contrary to the spirit of Sufi Islam, for example, sectarian preachers and ultra-conservative practices especially towards women. Nor would it be difficult to spot incidents in which the process of Islamization was clearly linked to acts of intolerance towards members of other faiths or sects. But the lessons that were distinctly Sufi – that is, the lessons that took place under the direct authority of a Sufi master – could easily be described as constituting the majority. It is, therefore, fairly safe to state that the regular attendance of such lessons signifies the popular positive valuation of Sufi spiritual experience, as well as the desire to protect and perpetuate it.

Creating Spiritual Red Lines

Sufism is often associated with 'political quietism' (Gellner, 1993), even 'political weakness' that in some way aids state domination (Luizard, 1991). Such characterizations, however, fail to capture the strategic dimension of Sufi logic. One example that vividly illustrates the way in which Sufi leaders draw red lines with political authority is the way in which Grand Mufti, Kaftaru, reacted to the infamous *hijab* removal event (Sa'd, 2016). In 1980, the militias loyal to Rifat al-Asad, the uncle of the current president, were instructed to forcibly remove the *hijab* (or headscarves) of women on the streets of Damascus. Various sources recount that Grand Mufti, Kaftaru, instantly asked for a meeting with the president and requested his intervention

(Bani, 2005). Not only were the militias stopped but the president, Hafez al-Asad, publicly apologized as well (Sa'd, 2016). These types of events, infrequent as they might be, serve to dispel the image that Sufi leaders are appeasing political authority out of sheer political weakness rather than a premeditated strategic approach that is based on its own spiritual logic. Without such credibility, it would be impossible to imagine how Sufism can play a role in healing post-insurgency Syria. Evidently, the response of the Syrian political authority to the requests of Sufi leaders is not only based on the awareness that these Sufi leaders did not take a hostile position against them but also, even more importantly, based on the desire of the political authority to not alienate an important segment of society. It is important to note that the capacity of Sufi leaders to draw red lines is organically linked to the formerly mentioned point, that is, 'unleashing a flood of spiritual education'. The more numerous and successful the *durus*, the more popular the Sufi leaders are, and hence, the stronger their popular base. When the Sufi leaders draw red lines, they do so, on the basis of their consciousness of just how strong their popular base has become. The red lines they draw, however, are very carefully chosen. They are not the kind of red lines that stereotypical political opponents draw nor are they overly ambitious. It is an intricate equation, but the realm of the intricate is indeed a realm that lends itself to the Sufi sensibility and its methods.

Reweaving the Fabric

One of the major features of the 1990s is the extensive interfaith and intersect activities that took place in Syria, all led and sponsored by Grand Mufti, Kaftaru. Significantly, Kaftaru did not reach out directly to Syria's Christian or Alawite leaders, who were likely not to have responded warmly. Instead, Kaftaru reached out to the Vatican and Iran and through each created a syncretic culture that Syria's Christians as well as Syria's Alawites and Shiites found impossible to resist. Primarily, the interfaith events organized throughout the 1990s focused on the Vatican, but they were also inclusive of orthodox, protestant, and even evangelical Christian groups. When representatives of various groups would arrive in Syria, it went without saying that their Syrian parallels would participate in whatever events were arranged. Of all such events, the most successful was the 2001 visit of Pope John Paul II to the Umayyad mosque in Damascus (Stanley, 2001). Many Syrian Muslim figures opposed the idea of the pope entering the mosque, especially since this mosque was constructed where the cathedral of John once stood. They regarded his entry as a form of desecration even, according to some, a reclaiming of this site by Christendom. Kaftaru, however, was adamant that the event should take place. Kaftaru's position to support an interaction with

the foreign entity of the Vatican was primarily directed towards the Christians of Syria: to the Christians of Syria, Kaftaru's message was this – you have nothing to fear from us, our houses of worship are open to you!

The same type of approach was applied while dealing with the Alawites and Shiites of Syria. It was ironically far easier to organize an ecumenical (e.g., Sunni/Shiite) event with Iranian officials than it was with Syrian Shiites or Alawites. Hence, in direct cooperation with Mohammed Khatimi, who was the minister of culture, but who would later become the president of Iran, various events were organized in Damascus, Beirut, and Tehran that emphasized the bonds between various Muslim sects (Bani, 2005). Again, Kaftaru's actual motive behind encouraging these events was to create stronger ties with non-Sunni Syrians, far more than it was to create stronger ties with Iranian Shiites. It was not at all unusual for Kaftaru's Friday morning lesson to have Christian or Shiite guests who would be asked to deliver a short talk to over 5,000 members of the audience. Besides, Kaftaru himself would travel widely to participate in various interfaith/inter-sect conferences. Kaftaru's universal disposition – which strived to encompass all religions/sects within the larger picture of 'unity of being' – made him a good fit for the Syrian regime's efforts to put religious minorities on equal footing with Sunni Muslims (Commins and Lesch, 2013). With regard to this strategy, Bashir al-Bani (1911–2008), Kaftaru's right hand, commented: 'When your neighbour refuses to speak to you, the best thing to do is to become close friends with their friends. When they see how respected and trusted you are by their friends, they may in fact choose to let down their alarms and befriend you' (Bani, 2005).

Creating a Language

Of all the elements discussed here, none constitutes a more difficult challenge than the task of creating and conveying a language that most Syrians (not all Syrians, as it is clearly impossible) could relate to. More specifically, Kaftaru had to come up with a narrative of what had taken place in the 1980s and why he interacted with it the way he did so that even his opponents could relate to him – a narrative so powerful in its inner logic that almost all Muslim leaders would subsequently adopt, although without ascribing it to its original source. To be credible, the narrative could not neglect the fact that the Syrian regime had committed acts that could easily be described as war crimes. Everyone in Syria was familiar with the stories of imprisonment without trial, executions, and perhaps most important, the storming of Hama in 1982 which resulted in the killing of thousands of civilians. Hence, Kaftaru had to somehow address all of this, and yet justify the position of maintaining an alliance with the Syrian government throughout these incidents (Habash, 1996).

Over time, such a narrative was indeed perfected. The narrative had several 'talking points', which were rarely shared all together at once. The first was the metaphor that the attempt to harvest a field too quickly was bound to result in the spoiling of the crop. The point here was that whatever the Muslim Brotherhood was trying to attain through the insurgency in the 1980s – allegedly, a 'democratic future for Syria' (Mullis, 2016) – was something that the majority of Syrians were simply not prepared to embrace. As per Sufi literature, the political leaders, even those who seize power by force, are ought to be essentially reflective of the nature of their subjects: after all, the prophetic legacy says, 'As you are so too will your rulers above you be'. Kaftaru would often provoke the prophetic biography during his morning lessons and focus in particular on the Mecca period where the Prophet stayed committed to non-violence in response to the hostile acts of his opponents for over thirteen years. Even after the Prophet became the leader of his own state Medina, he chose to have a peace treaty – that is, the Treaty of Hudabiyah – with his opponents when he felt the conditions so entailed. In fact, some of the Prophet's unsympathetic companions are reported to have expressed discomfort or even anger with this treaty (Habash, 1996). Upon sharing this story, Kaftaru would draw correlations between the Prophet's unsympathetic companions and those Muslim leaders who had adversely reacted to the treaty that Kaftaru had reached with the Syrian regime. Kaftaru would end with a rhetorical question: if the Prophet himself did not hesitate to agree on a peace treaty with those who had imprisoned and tortured his companions, why is it so difficult to accept a similar act from the Grand Mufti of Syria? (Habash, 1996) Again, much of this would be articulated using allegories and subtle language.

Kaftaru was well aware that his audience included the government security officers monitoring and recording his every word. Nevertheless, he was also aware of the fact that the events that he was alluding to were very much alive in the memory of his audience, and that the connections would easily be made by them between what took place in the 1980s and the prophetic stories he was referring to. At times, Kaftaru would even seem to be ridiculing some of the objectives of the Muslim Brotherhood and would ask his students whether the Prophet was preoccupied with the amputation of hands (a reference to the Brotherhood's objective of implementing Sharī'a law), or with the creation of a kind and merciful Muslim society? (Habash, 1996) Perhaps, the most difficult aspect of this narrative was that which required addressing the brutality of the Syrian regime. This was achieved by Kaftaru, as well as by his disciples, through the very indirect (yet easily understood) references to just how precious human life is in the sight of God. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the lessons of Kaftaru and his disciples in the 1990s would be replete with references to the value of human life and the dire divine punishments that

await those who mistreat others, let alone torture or kill them. In the minds of Kaftaru's audience, at least those sympathetic to his words, these references could only mean that what the Syrian regime had committed in Hama and elsewhere were morally reprehensible acts, and these morally reprehensible acts would not go without punishment in the long run. To paraphrase Kaftaru's speech: 'The insurgency was not only based on a thwarted understanding of Islam, but it also miscalculated the readiness of Syrians to embrace its message; in so doing, it provoked a regime which became infamous for its brutality; as for the violent acts of the regime, everyone with a moral compass condemns them and no one escapes divine justice'. However, the differences between what took place in Syria during the 1980s–1990s and what is taking place now are not only very significant, but they at times make the very comparison seem flawed.

THE PRESENT CHALLENGE: TOWARDS AN APPRAISAL OF SUFI PRAXIS IN GLOBAL POLITICS

The Muslim Brotherhood insurgency was initiated by the Islamic militants called 'Fighting Brigades' (*al-saarayah al-muqatilah*). On 16 June 1979, a faction of the Fighting Brigades carried out an attack on the cadets at Aleppo Artillery School, killing eighty-three Alawites (Lefèvre, 2013).[6] This was followed by several other assassinations. This is not to say that the Syrian regime was not repressive prior to these incidents; indeed it was. The point, rather, is that the violence in this particular historical moment was not initiated by the Syrian regime. Furthermore, the violent response of the Syrian regime occurred at a very specific geographical location – that is, Hama. By contrast, the incidents that began in 2011 tell a very different story. Here we have the Syrian regime responding with live bullets to peaceful protesters and eventually using violence in almost every part of Syria. One could go on elaborating on these differences, but in the end, there are several commonalities between the occurrences of the 1980s and the past eight years that one would have to acknowledge.

Indeed, once again we have a confrontation between segments of Syrian society and the Syrian regime. Yes, in this recent case, it is Bashar al-Asad who is the president of the Syrian regime, not Hafez al-Asad. Nevertheless, insofar as the major strategic features are concerned, the Syrian regime has not changed after the ascent of Bashar al-Asad to power. It is still willing to use whatever force is necessary to quell dissent, and it is still willing to sign an unwritten agreement with those Muslim leaders that make it clear that they are not part of the camps that function as the opponents of the regime. Among the present Muslim leaders, the chief heirs of Kaftaru's organizational

heritage in Damascus are the Kaftariya and the Qubaisiyyat. The former includes male disciples of Kaftaru who continue to serve as *imams* in mosques delivering Friday sermons, and as they did in the 1990s, give *durus* or spiritual lessons on morality. The Qubaisiyyat, on the other hand, include female disciples of *shaikha* Munira Qubaisi, who was once a disciple of Kaftaru. Her followers have been estimated at over 70,000 worldwide, and in Damascus they continue to oversee schools and institutes which, in addition to the Syrian government's national curriculum, offer religious knowledge to their students (Imady, 2016). Both the Kaftariya and the Qubaisiyyat are equally involved in the provision of social services, and of course all such activities are both sanctioned and monitored by the Syrian government. In fact, some of the members of the Kaftariya and the Qubaisiyyat even occupy official positions at the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs of the Syrian government.

However, unlike the legitimizing language crafted by Kaftaru, the majority of the leaders of both the Kaftriya and the Qubaisiyyat make no public announcements with regard to the occurrences of the past eight years. They neither condemn the opposition nor do they glorify the Syrian regime's actions as other groups in Damascus do, including the current Grand Mufti. It appears that a new treaty has been signed between the Syrian regime, on the one hand, and the Sufi lineage of the Kaftariya and the Qubaisiyyat, on the other – a treaty that unlike the one reached in the 1980s–1990s, allows these Sufi disciples to practise 'symbolic silence'. This could either reflect the fact that the current Syrian regime is well aware that if it were to insist on a vocal defence of its actions, it would even lose the Sufi leaders of the Kaftariya and the Qubaisiyyat, since its actions for the past eight years, no language, however creative, can possibly defend. Alternatively, this could also reflect that unlike the 1980–1990s, the Kaftariya and the Qubaisiyyat do not have a charismatic leader like Kaftaru who could come up with a language that was both credible and convincing.

It is, nonetheless, interesting to note that a prominent Sufi Muslim leader, Mohammed Ramadan al-Buti (1929–2013), did try to do what Kaftaru did in the 1990s. On one occasion, he sought to share an image that in effect regarded the protests at the very least unwise and at the very worst part of a larger conspiracy against Syria (Pierret, 2013). The Syrian regime that, prior to this occasion, sidelined al-Buti was later eager to embrace him and present him as an authentic voice of Islam in Syria. But then, unlike Kaftaru, al-Buti had a far smaller following and his message for the most part was rejected by the young protesters. In 2013, al-Buti was assassinated while giving a lesson at the Iman mosque in Damascus. While the Syrian regime claimed that al-Buti was assassinated by a suicide bomber belonging to an extremist faction, the opposition claimed that his killing was arranged by the Syrian regime

itself because al-Buti was about to turn against them. And the Sufi leaders and disciples of the Kaftariya and the Qubaisiyyat remained silent.

Under these circumstances, one might conclude that three out of four elements of the Sufi fourfold strategy enacted in the 1980s–1990s have been presently embraced by the members of the Kaftariya and the Qubaisiyyat. The important difference lies in the absence of a language that is both credible and convincing. This has been replaced with a policy of silence. The critical question is no doubt whether the protection of Syria's spiritual identity and healing of the severe wounds of the past eight years can take place in the absence of such a language. On perhaps a deeper level, the question is whether or not the emergence of a new language must await the implementation of a political transition that, at the very least, marks a change in the primary symbols of the existing Syrian regime. What is both noteworthy and fascinating at the same time is that the members of the Kaftariya and the Qubaisiyyat did not wait for these questions to be answered but rather embarked on what they can pursue and left for time, or as they would say, for the design of God, what they are currently unable to undertake.

But then, how do the past and present Sufi engagements with Syrian politics pave the way for a general appraisal of Sufi praxis in global politics? First, the overall Sufi engagements with Syrian politics make it clear that Sufism, as a branch of Islamic mysticism, blurs the dualistic divisions between the 'ideal' and the 'real': the new global presence of Sufism can translate the idealistic vision of 'oneness of reality/unity of being' by organizing realistic interfaith and inter-sect dialogues among diehard antagonistic camps, thereby breaking artificially imposed barriers that forbid the mellowing down of dogmatic religious/sectarian identities. Since the political outcomes of the mellowing down of dogmatic religious/sectarian identities are not confined to the realm of philosophy/knowledge (normally seen as the realm of 'soft power') and also penetrate into the realm of military and economic dynamics (usually recognized as the realm of 'hard power'), the Sufi praxis in global politics does not support a compartmentalized understanding of power.

Rather, Sufism's non-compartmentalized understanding of power (which is both 'hard' and 'soft' in one go) can potentially confront all extremist tendencies whether they are propagated by self-proclaimed surface-level advocates of 'terrorism', 'democracy', or 'despotism'. While confronting the extremist tendencies, the Sufi praxis undoubtedly seeks to preserve plural religious and sectarian identities, yet it abstains from approaching these plural religious and sectarian identities (and their explicitly or implicitly expressed political agendas) as binary categories. In other words, Sufi praxis in global politics foregrounds the moral sanctity of this-worldly human life, and the moral sanctity of this-worldly human life becomes the unitary/non-dualistic ethical foundation for not only drawing strategic red lines but also reweaving

the otherwise undivided fabric of humanity on earth. Most certainly, these Sufi strategic red lines do not split the religion-based/sect-based warring camps into polar opposites, for example, 'terrorist vs. non-terrorist' or 'democratic vs. non-democratic' or 'despotic vs. anti-despotic'. Rather, the Sufi vision of 'oneness of reality/unity of being' treats all these religion-based/sect-based warring camps as outwardly distinctive yet inwardly interconnected manifestations of 'hidden' oneness: as such, all these religion-based/sect-based warring camps are accepted as equal stakeholders in the dialogues on global politics.

Nevertheless, the legitimacy or illegitimacy of Sufi religious dignitaries – who try to build platforms for interfaith and inter-sect dialogues on global politics – depends upon the kind of 'language' they speak or 'silence' they observe. While 'language' is already perceived as a site of inclusion and exclusion (Schrover and Schinkel, 2013), and 'silence' is readily admitted as a device for 'survival' (Hansen, 2000) or 'resistance' (Parpart, 2010) in national and international politics, the Sufi praxis embodies two innovations in this regard: first, it encourages the invention of a language that could operate as a bridge to reconnect the warring camps that remain 'included yet excluded' by virtue of 'speaking past' each other; second, it promotes the utilization of silence as a transitory pause that gives necessary time and space for the gradual invention of a language which could then operate as a bridge to reconnect the warring camps that remain 'included yet excluded' by virtue of 'speaking past' each other. In this sense, the philosophical core of Sufism, understood as 'oneness of reality/unity of being', remains unchanged, but the Sufi praxis in global politics remains flexible enough to allow both the use of language/silence to transform global politics and the use of language/silence to get transformed under the impact of global politics.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The prolonged history of exchanges between Sufism and Syrian politics supply ample theoretical-practical nuances for capturing the importance of preserving Syrian spiritual identity in particular, and Global spiritual identity in general. While a plethora of religions/sects make alluring claims to spirituality, they more often than not reinforce divisive politics that feeds upon rigid identitarian gaps among human beings: as such, these religions/sects prohibit a kind of global politics that demands human beings to dilute their temporal 'I-ness'. Alternatively, the philosophy of Sufism (as an 'ideal') revolves around the vision of 'oneness of reality/unity of being' which, in turn, envisages a global politics that makes an appeal to dilute the temporal 'I-ness' and bridge the identitarian gaps among human beings without dissolving their

this-worldly diversity (as a 'reality'). In so doing, the ideal-real strategy of Sufi praxis refutes both: the extreme homogenization of religious/sectarian identities in the name of secularism/democracy/despotism and the extreme heterogenization of religious/sectarian identities in the name of secularism/democracy/despotism. Although the Sufi religious dignitaries take the lead in redirecting global politics beyond the extreme tendencies towards homogenization and heterogenization of religious/sectarian identities, the legitimacy/illegitimacy of these Sufi religious dignitaries is not sacrosanct; rather, the legitimacy/illegitimacy of these Sufi religious dignitaries is assessed on the basis of their capability to continuously invite all religion- and sect-based warring camps to participate in the incessant dialogues on global politics, even if these warring camps deviate from the normatively standardized paths of doing global politics.

NOTES

1. On the distinction between instrumentalist and expressive organizations, see Gordon and Babchuk (1959). On why these terms provide insights on 'Sufi' and 'Salafi jihadist' groups operating in Syria, see Imady (2016).

2. Itzchak Weismann (2005) discusses how Salafi thinkers themselves had roots in the revivalist Sufi traditions that existed prior to the twentieth century.

3. For details on Ahmad Kaftaru, see Habash (1996) and Böttcher (2004).

4. A significant number of books and articles have been written on the Muslim Brotherhood insurgency in Syria. For example, see Weismann (2004), Teitelbaum (2011), and Lefèvre (2013).

5. For an in-depth discussion on the nature of Sufi moral education imparted in Syria, see Humsi (1991), Riyad (2005), and Chagas (2013).

6. Nir Rosen (2012) comments: 'In the 1980s a radical group that found the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood (SMB) too moderate split off and called itself the Fighting Vanguard [or Fighting Brigades]. They were responsible for much of the violence that was blamed on the Brotherhood that traumatizes Syrian society to this day, much as the regime's attack on Hama where the armed Muslim Brothers concentrated also left permanent scars that have been reopened in the last year. SMB members fled into exile and remained active in the opposition, which also led them to dominate the Syrian National Council (SNC). During the administration of President George W. Bush the United States reached out to the SMB in order to undermine the regime of [President] Bashar al-Asad. Within the SNC, the SMB is behaving in a very authoritarian fashion and is facing growing criticism from both secular and Islamist opposition. The divides in the SNC are not Islamist versus secular. The secularist SNC President Burhan Ghalioun walks with the SMB. Other Islamists like the Imad al Din al Rashid's Syrian National Movement are hostile to the SMB'.

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Chapter 6

The Limits of the Sufi Idea of "Oneness of Reality" in Global International Relations

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> *Everyone praises what he believes; his God is his own creature, and in praising it he praises himself.* (Ibn al-'Arabī, 1978)

The twofold understanding that originates from the philosophical and historical readings of Sufism has created a major epistemological problem in scholarly traditions (Western and non-Western alike). On the one hand, the "philosophical" consideration of Sufism (especially in Ibn al-'Arabī's teachings) is perceived as a transhistorical model of "universal mysticism," which might provide a privileged terrain for mutual collaboration between human beings beyond all religious, ethnic, and cultural boundaries, on the grounds of a non-dualistic epistemology endorsing "oneness of reality" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) and amalgamating rationalist, reflectivist, and extra-rational methods of knowledge acquisition. On the other hand, the "historical" consideration of Sufism may ignore neither the diversity of trends, doctrines, and practices grouped under the label of *taṣawwuf* (Sufism) nor the explicit self-definition of all Sufi trends in history as "Muslim." Indeed, all great Sufi masters (including Ibn al-'Arabī) overtly referred to one definite religious form "Islam" and one definite epistemological foundation "the Quran," as transpired through exegesis and embodied in Prophet Muḥammad's historical example, the "Sunna." In particular, the widespread recommendations of Sufi masters to take the Quran and the Sunna as the touchstone for one's mystical inspiration (*ilhām*) might imply potential opposition between "subjective human inspiration" and "objective divine revelation." In this sense, rather than dissolving the allegedly Eurocentric dualism of "reflectivism vs. rationalism," the Sufi epistemological views might thus end up proposing a theocentric (or say, Islamo-centric) version of the same dualism. The present chapter evaluates how this Islamo-centric dualism might adversely affect

the prospects of Sufism as a proper philosophical foundation for an unbiased Global International Relations (IR) theory.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section takes on twin tasks: (1) it distinguishes between textual and contextual ways of comprehending the Sufi concept of "oneness of reality" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) and (2) it assesses the relative aptness of these textual and contextual ways for envisaging a Global IR theory. The second section examines the political challenges of implementing the Sufi concept of "oneness of reality/*waḥdat al-wujūd*"—which also emphasizes upon "God's Oneness" (*tawḥīd*)—in the Egyptian historical context of Late Ayyubids and Early Mamluks. Given the wide array of Sufi discourses associated with this historical time frame, this section selects three differing theoretical positions on God's oneness (*tawḥīd*) sanctioned by the Sufi *ṭarīqa*s related to Ibn Sab'īn, Ibn al-'Arabī, and Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī, respectively. Finally, the third section explores the possible linkage between the ideas of "oneness of reality" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) and "unity of religions" (*waḥdat al-adyān*)—also attributed to Ibn al-'Arabī and some other Sufi thinkers—and assesses if such ideas actually produced any impacts on Sufi attitudes vis-à-vis non-Muslims in the period under consideration, and if they could provide an appropriate groundwork for fair-minded interfaith dialogues in the (inter)national relations of the present time.

DECIPHERING "ONENESS OF REALITY" (*WAḤDAT AL-WUJŪD*): TEXTUAL AND CONTEXTUAL DEBATES

As it is widely recognized, the profession of oneness of God (*tawḥīd*) lies at the very heart of the Islamic faith. However, this solemn expression of monotheism does imply a permanent tension between two extremes: on the one hand, affirming an autonomous existence of creatures (as "other than God") may imply some kind of "associationism" (*shirk*) and, on the other hand, denying the autonomous existence of whatever is "other than God" may be conducive to some forms of monistic pantheism. This explains why Muslim thinkers have devoted most of their best efforts to reflect on the relationships between unity and multiplicity, aiming to simultaneously preserve God's transcendence (or separation from multiplicity of everything) and God's immanence (or unity with the multiplicity of everything). Together, God's transcendence and immanence define His relation to everything "other than God" (Shapoo, 2018). And His relation to everything "other than God," in turn, characterizes God in terms of duality: the transcendent God as distinct from the immanent God (Jironet, 2002). As Richard McGregor (2004: 90) points out, "seeing God's existence as the only existence" is somehow logically consistent with the strict monotheistic tenet of Islam, but it "was not

generally acceptable" (especially because of possible monistic developments of such view might be disruptive for Islamic traditional ontology and morals; see later); therefore, the need was felt, even among a majority of mystical thinkers, to preserve some recognizable distinctions between the Divine and the creation.

In this framework, Western and Muslim scholarship have paid growing attention, in the past few decades, to a complex of controversial doctrines referred to as the "oneness of reality" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*). This expression was probably coined by the mystical "hellenizing" thinker Ibn Sab'īn (d. 1269/70), but it was soon adopted, with slightly but crucially different meanings, by some disciples and commentators of the far more legendary mystical thinker Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 1240), known as "the Greatest Master" of Sufism (*al-Shaykh al-Akbar*).[1] Though the exact wording *waḥdat al-wujūd* does not appear as such in any of Ibn al-'Arabī's works, his disciples (usually referred to as *Akbarian* from their master's nickname) must have found that such notion was crucial to their master's views, and many modern scholars agreed with this opinion. For instance, Chittick (1989: 79–80) argues that though Ibn al-'Arabī "does not employ the term [*waḥdat al-wujūd*], the idea permeates his work." But Chittick warns that a concise conception of the term *waḥdat al-wujūd*—whereby the spatial-temporal extension of everything is seen as the manifested existence of "one Being/one reality"—may induce someone to take this doctrine for "another brand of pantheism," whereas the views of Ibn al-'Arabī cannot be naively reduced, inasmuch as they represent "one of the most sophisticated and nuanced expressions of the profession of God's unity (*tawḥīd*) to be found in Islamic thought".

A classical interpretation of the term *waḥdat al-wujūd* has been offered by Abū l-ʿAlā' al-ʿAfīfī (1980: 9) in his critical edition of Ibn al-'Arabī's *Fuṣūs al-Ḥikam*: he proclaims that "the reality of being is one in its substance and essence, (but) plural in its attributes and names. . . . If you consider it according to its essence, you call it *al-ḥaqq* [the Real, the Truth; one of the names of God]; if you consider it according to its attributes and names, that is to say, according to its manifestation in possible existences, you call it *khalq* [the created things]." Giuseppe Scattolin (2004: 125) reiterates that Ibn al-'Arabī represents the structure of reality as a "composite unity" (*unità composita*), that is, "neither mere plurality, nor mere unity," but a "synthesis between the Creating Reality [*al-ḥaqq*] and the created [things] (*khalq*)," where the two terms do not designate two different realities but "two different aspects of one and the same reality." From this perspective, one might argue that Ibn al-'Arabī does not regard created things as separated "objects" posited by the "subject-God" and that, by considering both terms as different aspects of one and the same reality, his theories might provide a suitable epistemological foundation for a "subject-object merger."

And this epistemological foundation for a "subject-object merger" is exemplified through another key element in Ibn al-'Arabī's thought, that is, the notion of "unity of religions" (*waḥdat al-adyān*), which assumes that all religious creeds are different rays of one and the same circle, whose center is truth. Ostensibly, Ibn al-'Arabī's thought on "oneness of reality" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) and "unity of religions" (*waḥdat al-adyān*)—which might provide a suitable epistemological foundation for "subject-object merger"—is relevant for formulating a Global IR theory. However, even if this theoretically oriented operation of "textual analysis" is legitimate and fruitful in philosophical terms (as it allows to "actualize" ancient textual elements in a new historical framework and thus gives them new life and new meanings), such efforts of actualization must be substantiated by the "contextual analysis" of the same textual elements in the historical situations in which they were produced, received (or rejected), and variously reworked under different social, cultural, and political conditions over time and space.

An emphasis on "contextual analysis" is particularly recommended in the field of Sufi studies where "textual analysis" has largely dominated, until recent times, with some consequences. For instance, it is the mostly non-contextual approach to Sufi studies in Western academy that has created an impression that Sufism (Muslim mystics) represents the most "tolerant" side of Islamic culture and the most promising field for interreligious and intercultural dialogues. Two main trends emerged concerning the interpretation of the relations between Sufism (Muslim mystics) and Islamic culture at large. Many scholars, especially in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, regarded Sufism as the result of different kinds of supposed external influences on Muslims (from Hellenistic philosophy to Hinduism, from Buddhism to Christianity), arguing that such a deep and refined mysticism could not originate in a purely "legalistic" religion as Islam was in their eyes. On the contrary, some other scholars saw Sufism as the purest expression of Islam and the most proper historical development of the Qur'anic message and of Muḥammad's moral and spiritual teachings. In both cases, Sufism was often constructed as being at odds with the outer dimensions of Islam, especially the juridical and political ones, to such an extent that the idea of permanent (if not inherent) tension between the "jurists" (*fuqahā'*) and the Sufis (*fuqarā'*, literally meaning "poor") was sort of a historiographic commonplace until recent years (Knysh, 2006). Such oversimplified representations have been abandoned in the past decades, thanks to the huge increase in historical research that focus more on "Sufis" than "Sufism," that is, the ideas and practices of Sufi masters/groups considered in their "contextual" relations with other actors in a specific historical frame and not only in their "textual" relations with the teachings/doctrines of previous and subsequent Sufi masters/groups.

The drive for the "social insertion" (Garcin, 1970) of Sufis in different historical contexts came not only from internal evolutions in Western Sufi studies, and from some major changes in methods and perspectives in the general field of the history of religions, as indicated in the studies on socio-anthropological dimensions of sanctity in Late Antiquity by Peter Brown (1981 and 1989) but also from a distinctive trend of Sufi studies within the Muslim world itself. Some prominent Sufi intellectuals were equally mastering "inward/esoteric" and "outward/exoteric" characteristics of Islamic sciences and were at times also bridging Islamic and non-Islamic (mostly European) cultures. For example, Abū l-Wafā al-Taftāzānī (1930–1994), who was also a historian of philosophy (both Islamic and European) and who acted, for many years, both as the head of the Egyptian Supreme Council for Sufi Ways and the president of the Egyptian Philosophical Association, contributed a great deal to the outlining of a more complex and nuanced image of the relationships between the Sufis and their societies across time and space (with special but not exclusive focus on Egyptian history). On the one hand, this effort was somehow connected to the "contextual" situation of Al-Taftāzānī (1968 and 1976), especially to his need to fight against powerful anti-Sufi criticism that was spreading in Egypt and other Muslim countries from different sides (e.g., Wahhabis, Salafis, Muslim Brothers, and some secular trends) and to rebuke widespread assumptions on Sufis' allegedly inherent fatalism and/or aloofness from social reality. On the other hand, his works did provide important "textual" evidence showing that involvement in social, political, and military life has actually characterized most Sufi masters/groups throughout Islamic history, along with their engagement, from different and sometimes conflicting viewpoints, in doctrinal debates concerning both "invisible" and "visible" dimensions of human life. As a consequence, theoretical viewpoints expressed by Sufi masters on "visible" and "invisible" matters need to be understood not only in their relations with the textual-philosophical heritage but also in their relations with the contextual-historical trends and events in sciences, politics, and societal life at large.

So, the central question about re-employment of Ibn al-'Arabī's texts on "oneness of reality" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) for building a Global IR theory needs to be examined in the light of some supplementary questions: What interpretations of "oneness of reality" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) have actually been produced across time and space, by Ibn al-'Arabī, his followers, his detractors, or other (Sufi and non-Sufi) actors playing in historically determined contexts? Were monistic interpretations of this concept, at least in some historical contexts, actually dominating Sufi circles beyond Ibn al-'Arabī's direct followers and commentators? And was the auxiliary notion of "unity of religions" (*waḥdat al-adyān*) well received in (Sufi and non-Sufi) circles other than that of Ibn al-'Arabī? Did references to the notions of "oneness of reality" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) and/or

"unity of religions" (*waḥdat al-adyān*) lead to any specific theory, or at least any shared common set of representations and practices among Sufis, concerning their relations with the "others" (including non-Muslims) either inside or outside the so-called *Dār al-Islām*? And, in that case, did such developments initiate any attempts to overcome moral and juridical distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims, or at least to foster new juridical reflections on this issue? Given the vast scope of such questions and the irreducible variety of the relevant historical experiences, the next two sections try to probe these questions on a very small scale, that of Egyptian Sufi networks (with some insight into Syrian and Andalusian-Maghribi networks) in the historical context of Late Ayyubid and Early Mamluk time (roughly 1220s–1320s).

This particular historical context is truly crucial in Islamic history from many viewpoints: it marked the consolidation of special relationships between Sufi mystics and Sunni political authorities (the Ayyubids, then the Mamluks) that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī had started from the very beginning of his regime, thereby paving the way for collaboration between mystical and juridical environments and for subsequent integration of Sufi sciences into the system of Islamic sciences in the country. Also, Egypt was one of the first countries in which the concerned notions (i.e., "oneness of reality" and "unity of religions") gained momentum in spiritual and intellectual milieus, thanks to the active presence of some prominent disciples of Ibn Sab'īn and Ibn al-'Arabī, such as Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 1274), Al-Tilmisānī (d. 1291), and Al-Shushtarī (d. 1269/71). In Egypt, these Sufi intellectuals, working along slightly different theoretical lines from each other, were able to establish important relations with different Sufi circles, including the "sober" group of the Shādhiliyya that coalesced around the Moroccan master Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 1258) in the 1240s and that soon became a mainstream Sufi community (*ṭarīqa*), especially due to the huge textual production by Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 1309). Furthermore, this was also the context in which the main lines of the centuries-long polemics about the *waḥdat al-wujūd* were set, especially by the prominent Ḥanbalī scholar (*'ālim*) Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328); the latter, in the framework of his broad criticism against most Sufis of his time, grouped the followers of Ibn Sab'īn and Ibn al-'Arabī under the polemical label *ittiḥādiyya/ittiḥādiyyūn* (or "tenants of unification between God and the creation"), and thus started what Chodkiewicz (1999) called the "posthumous trial" against Ibn al-'Arabī.

TRACING THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF "GOD'S ONENESS (*TAWḤĪD*)": THE EGYPTIAN CONTEXT

In general terms, the attitude of "seeing God's existence as the only (real) existence" may be accepted as a logical outcome of the monotheistic

foundations of Islamic faith, that is, the profession of God's oneness (*tawḥīd*). In this sense, some degree of epistemological monism did not sound outrageous even to the ears of non-mystical believers. However, Muslims scholars have been extremely careful in condemning any shift from epistemological monism to ontological monism (a point also discussed in chapter 3). Since the shift from epistemological monism to ontological monism could threaten the distinction between God and His creatures as well as the distinction between different creatures, it could virtually have devastating effects on the whole fabric of Islamic laws and morals. In this regard, some bold statements by Muslim mystics (such as Al-Bisṭāmī or Al-Ḥallāj) in moments of theopathic contact, and expressing the full extinction of any illusory sense of one self's autonomous existence with respect to God, aroused heated debates and harsh condemnations, as they were seen as claims for one's "unification" (*ittiḥād*)[2] with God and/or affirmations of pantheistic views implying that God would "dwell" in creatures or even "incarnate" in them (*ḥulūl*).

On the contrary, the tenants of the so-called Sufism of sobriety, following al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 910), were quite careful in preserving the ontological gap between God and everything "other than God." Also, they scrupulously avoided views that might justify one's infringements on Islamic laws and morals on the ground of his or her spiritual state, including that of "extinction/annihilation" (*fanā'*) in God. They warned their disciples that no one might be regarded as a saint if his or her inner inspiration is at odds with the Qur'an and the Sunna and clarified that some parcel of one's individual consciousness does continue to be active even in the mystical state of extinction/annihilation (*fanā'*) so that one is bound by legal obligations even in that state (still he or she may be excused for "heterodox" theopathic expressions in that state). Besides, some Sufi masters stressed that the most perfect state for a saint is not extinction/annihilation (*fanā'*) but permanence in God (*baqā'*), that is, the state in which, after being annihilated, the saint is brought back to the world but is kept present to God in "permanence," so that he or she may act in the world as a mirror of God's will, without being touched by unlawful desires and deviating inspirations and thus working as a "living model" for other human beings.

In this framework, some shared guidelines were placed by Sufi thinkers such as Al-Qushayrī (d. 1073) and Al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) (Griffel, 2007). Al-Ghazālī, in particular, was able to combine several threads of Islamic culture (going back to so differing sources as Ash'arite theology, Sufi traditions, and Avicenna's [or Ibn Sīnā's] philosophy) and craft a harmonized version of God's oneness (*tawḥīd*). For Al-Ghazālī, the highest level of God's oneness (*tawḥīd*) is that of the fully realized mystic (*ṣiddīq*) who "sees nothing in existence but One [i.e., God]" (*lā yarā fī-l-wujūd illā wāḥid*). Yet Al-Ghazālī clearly preserves the monotheistic notion of creation and reaffirms the ontological distinction between God, as the only being whose existence is

necessary (*wājib*) and real (*wujūd ḥaqīqī*), and His creatures, whose existence is only "borrowed" (from God) and therefore metaphorical (*majāzī*).[3] Also, Al-Ghazālī emphasizes that God's will is absolutely free, whereas the actions of created beings are determined by God's decrees, even thought for the purposes of moral life a certain illusion of freedom is lent by God to the human beings. But, in spite of the broad success of Al-Ghazālī's synthesis, tensions between "monistic" and "monotheistic" perspectives never came to a complete end: different meanings of God's oneness (*tawḥīd*) continued to be produced in the following centuries, and the "compromise" between Sufism and philosophical Ash'arism (Griffel, 2007) remained a work in progress, as each Sufi thinker tried to shape it as per his or her own views/experiences. Not all possible solutions for "cooperation" among mystical, philosophical, and legal sciences were equally accepted by the ruling elites. For instance, the ruling elites in the Late Ayyubid and Early Mamluk periods grappled with three differing theoretical positions on God's oneness (*tawḥīd*) (or "oneness of reality") advocated by the Sufi groups related to Ibn Sab'īn, Ibn al-'Arabī, and Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh, respectively. In the following paragraphs, we shall first try to outline these three positions, and then evaluate whether these three positions on what is "other than God" might have had any significant impact on their tenants' respective attitudes toward those who were "other than Muslims."

Three Positions on God's Oneness (tawhid): Ibn Sab'in, Ibn al-Arabī, and Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh

As stated above, Ibn Sab'īn (d. 1269/70) probably coined the expression *waḥdat al-wujūd* ("oneness of reality"). In his complex language, this term seems to designate an ontologically monistic worldview "which admits no significant existential distinction between creation and the Creator" (McGregor, 2004: 197). According to Al-Taftāzānī (1984), Ibn Sab'īn's rich and varied cultural background included a wide array of spiritual and intellectual sources, ranging from the heritage of Greek philosophy as reworked by Muslim philosophers (*falāsifa*) such as Al-Farābī (d. 950), Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), Ibn Rushd (d. 1198) to ancient (and vaguely defined) "Eastern" traditions such as Hermetism, and from the mystical philosophical trends going back to the Andalusian thinker and ascetic Ibn Masarra (d. 931) to the Sufi master Abū Madyan Shu'ayb (d. 1197), who was the main reference for the following generations of Andalusian and Maghribi Sufis, up to the recent readings of Ibn al-'Arabī that, by the way, Ibn Sab'īn labeled as "corrupted" or "putrid" (*makhmūja*). In fact, Ibn Sab'īn's vision of the relations between unity and multiplicity—which was inspired by Ibn Sīnā's monistic views—delivered a theory of "Absolute oneness" (*al-waḥdat al-muṭlaqa*). According

to Al-Taftāzānī (1984: 198), this theory proposes that the Being (*al-wujūd*) is one (*wāḥid*), and it is God's being only (*wujūd Allāh faqaṭ*); as for all other apparent beings (*mawjūdāt*), their existence (*wujūd*) is essential with the being of the One (*'ayn wujūd al-wāḥid*).

Since Ibn Sab'īn left no room for any clear ontological distinction between God and everything "other than God," his views unnerved the religious and political authorities in Andalusia and, later on, in North Africa and in Egypt. In particular, when he was planning to settle in Cairo around the year 1246, some Maghribi jurists sent letters to several prominent figures in Egypt in order to warn them against him, whom they labeled as "an atheist who says that the Creator and the creatures are one and the same thing" (Al-Taftāzānī, 1984: 196). Eventually, Ibn Sab'īn moved to Mecca, where he finally found shelter under the Sharifian emir Abū Numayy Muḥammad (d. 1301). However, Ibn Sab'īn's Sufi way—also known as "al-ṭarīqa al-Sab'īniyya"—had some considerable following in Egypt in Late Ayyubid and Early Mamluk periods. Ibn Sab'īn's great disciple, Al-Shushtari (d. 1269), animated an important Sufi network between Alexandria and Damietta. In his literary works, Al-Shushtari focused more on the love for God rather than on more complex doctrinal issues, which allowed him to be accepted by local authorities and to establish good relations with the followers of other Sufi paths, especially the Shādhiliyya. In the long term, as Louis Massignon (1949) suggested, the Shādhiliyya probably absorbed the Alexandrian-Damiettan branch of the Sab'īniyya. However, this branch was very much alive at the beginning of the fourteenth century, as Ibn Taymiyya complains, that Alexandria had become a "Devil's nest" around that time due to the active followers of "Ibn Sab'īn's way" and "Ibn al-'Arabī's way," which he condemned under the common label of "monistic" (*ittiḥādiyya*) (Cecere, 2014).

Unlike Ibn Sab'īn, Ibn al-'Arabī seems to have been quite careful to preserve a clear distinction between the "Necessary Being" (*wājib al-wujūd*) (i.e., the reality which cannot not be) and the "possible beings/things" (i.e., everything "other than God"), to which he attributes a somewhat ambiguous status of relative existence, whose actualization depends on the free choice of the Necessary Being. Chittick (1989: 79) summarizes: "In God's knowledge the things exist neither in the cosmos nor in themselves. But they do exist in God in a manner analogous to the way our thoughts exist in our minds." In itself, everything "other than God" is non-existence, but God can make a thing come to existence in cosmos (*'ālam*) by "giving preponderance" (*tarjīḥ*) to existence over non-existence with regard to that thing. However, this existence is not fully real because, even when they are brought to existence within the cosmos, the things do not exist in themselves. Conversely, if God gives preponderance to non-existence over existence with regard to a certain thing, the thing becomes non-existent (*ma'dūm*) because it does not come

into existence within the cosmos. But this non-existence is also not fully real, because possible things which are not brought to existence within the cosmos are however known to God, so they have some fashion of existence in His mind. Possible things, therefore, may exist or not exist depending on "circumstances" that go back, ultimately, to God's free will: "The 'cosmos' [*'ālam*] consists of everything other than God. It is none other than the possible things; whether or not they exist. . . . Possibility is their necessary property in the state of their non-existence as well as their existence . . . everything ["other than God" is constantly submitted to God's free will and] God is independent from worlds" (Chittick, 1989: 82–83).

In due course, however, a few detractors and followers conferred monistic interpretations upon some of Ibn al-'Arabī's works. Although Ibn al-'Arabī enjoyed a very high reputation as a Sufi intellectual during his lifetime, it was only after his death, especially after the posthumous circulation of his *Fuṣūs al-Ḥikam*, that he was accused of heterodox statements and became the highly controversial figure that he remains until today (Chodkiewicz, 1999). As per his most severe critic, Ibn Taymiyya, the theory of "oneness of reality/unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) was inherently at odds with God's transcendence (*tanzīh*) and with the revealed (Qur'anic) description of God as "Creator ex nihilo (*khāliq*)" and "sustainer (*rāziq*)" of created existences. These two qualifications, for Ibn Taymiyya, certainly implied a "process of production" of reality from nothing out of God's free will, whereas the theory of "oneness of reality/unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) conveyed a "process of manifestation" of reality. In addition to this, Ibn Taymiyya argued that the theory of "oneness of reality/unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) was also morally disruptive because it would imply the idea that the realized mystic should be indifferent toward the moral qualification of human acts, as he or she should see every (seeming) action of creatures as nothing but a creation of God, which always requires full consent on the part of the "servant" (*'abd*).

Although 'Afif al-Din al-Tilimsani suggested that the creatures are to the Creator as the waves are to the sea, a classical "unionist" metaphor which signifies the essential identity between "reality-essence" (the sea without waves) and "reality-manifestation" (the sea with waves) (Bell, 1979: 90), the polemics about the theory of "oneness of reality/unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) have never come to an end. A major controversy broke out around 1975 with the state-supported publication of Omar Yahya's critical edition of Ibn al-Arabī's masterpiece *al-Futuhat al-Makkiyya*. On this occasion, the religious institutions, the media, and even the Egyptian Parliament split over the call for banning the publication of this book. This "affair" lasted for years and things went so far that, in February 1979, the book was actually banned by the Egyptian State, but this decision was rapidly changed and the censorship was finally lifted, with the intervention of Al-Taftāzānī and other members

of the Supreme Council for the Sufi Ways in favor of Ibn al-'Arabī's "legitimacy" (Homerin, 1986). While the monistic interpretation of Ibn al-'Arabī's thought dominated the Western scholarship for a long part of the twentieth century, many Western and Muslim scholars alike are now leaving such interpretations and willingly trying to read "oneness of reality/*waḥdat al-wujūd*" through the filter of what is called "unity of seeing/*waḥdat al-shuhud*," that is, epistemological monism, but not ontological monism, which, in line with Al-Ghazālī, does not only see anything but One (God) in the existence but also draws a clear ontological distinction between One (God) and the many (created beings/things).

Another Sufi thinker who seems to be not explicitly responsive to the charm of Ibn al-'Arabī is Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh al-Iskandarī, one of the most influential Sufi masters in the history of Shādhiliyya *ṭarīqa*, in particular, and medieval (and modern) Sufism, in general. In his pioneering study on Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh's life and works, Al-Taftāzānī (1969) focuses on the word "oneness" (*al-aḥadiyya*) which indicates a "(peculiar) attribute of the Divine Essence that cannot be shared by any created being" (*ṣifat al-dhāt al-ilāhiyya allatī lā yushāriku-hā fi-hā makhlūq*), and, therefore, "oneness" (*al-aḥadiyya*), remains the specific attribute of God (*ṣifat Allāh*), who is the Absolute Being (*al-mawjūd almuṭlaq*) qualified by the attribute of the Real Being (*al-wujūd al-ḥaqīqī*), and is the Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*) from whom every existent thing (*mawjūd*) gets its existentiation (*ijād*) and maintenance (*imdād*). While Paul Nwyia (1972) affirms that the "making" of Shādhiliyya *ṭarīqa* was not inspired by Ibn al-'Arabī and that Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh consistently avoided a monistic metaphysics, Maurice Gloton (1989) provides an Ibn al-'Arabī-inspired commentary of Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh's *Kitāb al-qaṣd al-mujarrad fī ma'rifat al-ism al-mufrad*, a treatise on linguistic, theological, and mystical dimensions of the Name of God "*Allāh*." Likewise, Éric Geoffroy (1998: 301), in his French translation of Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh's *Laṭā'if al-minan* states that the entire work is filled with Ibn al-'Arabī's doctrine of "oneness of reality/unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*): in Geoffroy's eyes, the only real difference between the two thinkers would be of language. It seems that the scholarly disagreements on the possible influence of Ibn al-'Arabī on Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh are deemed to remain unsolved, also because it largely depends on the differing meanings that the notion of "oneness of reality/unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) is given by different scholars.[4]

So, how is it possible to classify the Shādhilī views on the relations between God and created beings (as provided by Ibn 'Aṭā'Allāh) under the label of "oneness of reality/unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*)? Distinctly, Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh never subscribes to monistic or "pantheistic" expressions as he remains constantly careful to preserve the ontological gap between God and His creatures. In his ubiquitous references to the relations between God

and created beings, Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh constantly emphasizes that God is the only Real Being, but carefully avoids any fully monistic implication of such statement, by according some degree of relative existence also to created beings which, in themselves, are to be considered as non-existent or “non-being” (*‘adam*). Ibn ‘Aṭā’Allāh, in accordance with Al-Ghazālī’s distinction between “absolute being” and “relative being,” insists that God only exists in the absolute sense and that everything other than God exists only in relation to God. As such, Ibn ‘Aṭā’Allāh’s views seem to be not too far from a temperate notion of “oneness of reality/*waḥdat al-wujūd*” which is at odds with the fully monistic/pantheistic interpretation that was later attributed to Ibn al-‘Arabī on the grounds of Ibn Taymiyya’s polemics. In fact, the early masters of the Shādhiliyya (and Ibn ‘Aṭā’Allāh, for sure) adopted a “conciliatory” attitude, which was typical to them, concerning the relations between mystical knowledge and revealed notions. Historically speaking, Shādhilī and his successors consistently called for compliance with the *sharī‘a* at whatever stage of the spiritual path and for complete integration between “inward/esoteric” and “outward/exoteric” aspects of Islam. Indeed, Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh explicitly states that al-Shādhilī insisted on the need to subordinate one’s mystical inspiration (*ilhām*) to the Qur’an and the Sunna, God having granted believers right guidance in the Qur’an and the Sunna, which are sources of true knowledge, and not in individual inspirations that may often be deceptive.

However, this does not mean that either Shādhilī or Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh constantly gave a preference to rational learning than mystical illumination. On the contrary, in his *Latā’if al-minan*, while drawing the biographies of Shādhilī and expounding his own theory of “sanctity” (*walāy*a), Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh provides an epistemological conception which proclaims that each form of knowledge is an “unveiling” from God: as such, each science (*‘ilm*) ultimately relies on divine “unveiling” (*kashf*) and human knowledge is connected (and somehow “proportional”) to divine love. Far from opposing “acquired” and “inspired” knowledge, Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh (1999: 34) stresses the inner unity between different sciences with regard to their origin and their ultimate goal in God: he overtly claims that the “friends of God” (*awliyā’ Allāh*) are the true scholars (*ulamā’*) and thus, according to a well-known ḥadith (*al-‘ulamā’ warathat al-anbiyā’*), the true legitimate “heirs of the Prophet.” Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh holds the opinion that a sound juridical formation may be useful as a preliminary tool for those who wish to engage on the spiritual path (as it was the case for himself and for Al-Shādhilī), but he clearly states that an appropriate understanding of the Law is only possible by means of spiritual illumination. Indeed, Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Allāh (1999:108) quotes Al-Mursī (Al-Shādhilī’s first successor) as saying: “We (the Sufis) share the knowledge of the jurists (*fuqahā’*). But the jurists (i.e. non-Sufi jurists) do not share our (mystical) knowledge.”

In a way, Ibn ʻAṭāʾ Allāh's "illuminative epistemology" provides a crucial point of contact between the differing Sufi groups allied with the Shādhiliyya, Ibn Sabʻīn, and Ibn al-ʻArabī. These three differing Sufi groups seem to share a tendency toward the use of *ta'wīl* ("allegorical interpretation") of the Qur'an and the hadith. It was on these grounds that they managed to make some controversial Sufi doctrines acceptable to mainstream scholars and common believers in Egypt (Cecere, 2014), thereby successfully consolidating a "compromise" between Sufism and philosophical Ashʻarism supported by the Ayyubid ruling elites. While this compromise helps to explain how the Shādhiliyya played a significant role in establishing cooperation between the mystical and the juridical dimensions of Islam in Mamluk Egypt, the next section examines whether this compromise also paved the way for a "unity of religions."

FROM "ONENESS OF REALITY" TO "UNITY OF RELIGIONS": THE SUFIS VIS-À-VIS NON-MUSLIMS

As we have seen above, Ibn Sabʻīn, Ibn al-ʻArabī, and Ibn ʻAṭāʾ Allāh seem to share a tendency to articulate their views on the relation between God and created beings in terms of a wide label, that is, "oneness of reality/unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), though with differing meanings for each of them. Also, they tend to give priority to mystical illumination over rational learning (or, as is the case with Ibn ʻAṭāʾ Allāh, to "re-absorb" rational learning in the sphere of mystical illumination, as every form of knowledge ultimately consists of God's gracious unveiling of some truths to His servant). According to some strands of now prevalent political thinking, both the elements—that is, "oneness of reality/unity of being" and "non-rationalist attitude"—could grant the Sufi thinkers and their respective ways (*ṭarīqa*s) a high potential in terms of materializing interfaith dialogues and mutual understanding and respect between people of different religions and denominations. But before jumping to the conclusive nature of such political thinking, one need to investigate if a nexus exists between the theoretical assumption of "oneness of reality/*waḥdat al-wujūd*" shared by Sufi thinkers and the actual practice of "dialogic openness" toward the other(s) in interfaith issues related to (inter) national relations.

Indeed, as far as is Ibn al-ʻArabī is concerned, the existence of this nexus has long been affirmed in wide zones of scholarship, ranging from R. A. Nicholson to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, from Abū al-ʻAlā ʻAfīfī to ʻAbd al-Qādir Maḥmūd and Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, from Annemarie Schimmel to Henry Corbin and William Chittick. As pointed out in a recent article by Media Zainul Bahri, all of the aforementioned scholars (and many others), beyond their differences,

supported the idea that Ibn al-ʻArabī along with another famous Sufi scholar Rūmī embraced the concept of "transcendental unity of religions," which is often referred to as *waḥdat al-adyān* (even if such exact wording was never used either by Ibn al-ʻArabī or Rūmī) and is sometimes explicitly presented as a logical corollary of the theory of "oneness of reality/unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) (Bahri, 2012: 463). According to ʻAbd al-Qādir Mahmūd, in particular, the connection between "oneness of reality/*waḥdat al-wujūd*" and "unity of religions/*waḥdat al-adyān*" becomes all the more evident in Ibn al-ʻArabī's notion of "the religion of love," evoked in one of his most well-known poems ever:

> My heart is capable of every form:
> a meadow for gazelles, a cloister for monks,
> For the idols, sacred ground/ Ka'ba for the circling pilgrim,
> the tables of the Torah, the scrolls of the Qur'an.
> I profess the religion of love;
> wherever its caravan turns along the way,
> that is the belief, the faith I keep. (Ibn al-ʻArabī, 1978: 19)

In Mahmūd's view, it is the theory of "oneness of reality/*waḥdat al-wujūd*" that encourages Ibn al-ʻArabī to consider that "God as the Essence of all gods is worshipped by mankind in various forms and ways" (Bahri, 478). Without entering into detailed debates on the actual meaning of "religion of love," that is concisely and critically analyzed in Bahri's article, two questions beg satisfactory answers: Did the aforementioned notion of "religion of love" and the so-called unity of religions have any impact beyond the Ibn al-ʻArabī-inspired Sufi circles, especially on the Sufis of the following generations? And did this "religion of love" imply, on the part of Ibn al-ʻArabī and/or some of his tenants, any attempts to questioning, either "textually" or "contextually," the rules of "dhimmi" (i.e., the rules for those Jews and Christians who were the subjects of the Islamicate states) and/or the general Islamo-centric views informing the social fabric as well as the theoretical frameworks of religious, juridical, and other sciences?

Although a comprehensive study of Sufi attitudes toward non-Muslims in medieval Egypt is still far from being written,[5] several surveys conducted on this issue incline to be quite skeptical concerning the outreach of the notion of "unity of religions" beyond Ibn al-ʻArabī. On a general note, as restated by Eric Geoffroy (1995: 69) in his study on Sufism in Mamluk Egypt and Syria, the dominant attitude on interfaith issues among Sufi masters of the time is apparently one of "rigueur." In this framework, representations of Jews and Christians in Muslim hagiographic sources generally tend to follow some stereotyped patterns. Most of the times, authors provide clichés on supposed doctrinal and moral flaws of Jews and Christians, or anecdotes concerning

someone converting to Islam following a miracle performed by a certain Sufi master (*shaikh*), showing the latter's generosity and devotion or his threatening and violent exercise of power that somehow attested to the truth of Islam. As Geoffroy points out, the supernatural favors or "miracles" (*karāmāt*) the Sufis claim to be endowed with are in service of the cause of Islam, even when they push non-Muslims to convert.

In fact, the historical sample analyses of attitudes attributed to some Sufi masters in Ayyubid and Mamluk sources, beyond the epistemological precautions required by the prevailing hagiographic and apologetic nature of the relevant material, do not allow to define any specific trait which would regularly differentiate between the Sufis (or at least the supporters of "oneness of reality/*waḥdat al-wujūd*") and their fellow Muslims on grounds of their respective relations with the non-Muslims (or the "other/s"). Only a few Sufi masters are attributed with positive interaction with the "dhimmis," that is, the Jews and Christians who were the subjects of the Islamicate states, living as discriminated "protected groups" under the stipulations of "dhimmi" (i.e., the rules meant for such Jews/Christians), allowing them to keep their own creeds and properties, on condition that they accepted a status of legal and social inferiority vis-à-vis Muslims.[6] Among them were controversial Sufi masters such as Ibn Isrāʾīl al-Dimashqī (d. 1278) and Ibn Hūd (d. 1300), who were actually the followers of Ibn al-ʻArabī and Ibn Sabʻīn, respectively.[7] Both of them are attributed (and sometimes reproached for) friendly attitudes toward the Jews and/or Christians, but various sources suggest that such behavior was ultimately motivated by a desire to convert non-Muslims to Islam. Ibn Hūd, in particular, is said to have converted many Jews (Geoffroy, 1995).

In point of fact, very few cases are known (at the present state of this research) in which the Sufis are attributed a kind and friendly attitude toward a "dhimmi" (or "dhimmis" in general) without being animated by a desire to convert them. One of these cases is also reported by Ibn ʻAṭāʾ Allāh (1999) concerning Abū l-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī, who had asked a Jewish ophthalmologist to heal some of his beloved ones and had treated him with so great respect that the Jewish physician greatly admired the virtues of the Muslim Sufi master (*shaykh*), but no mention at all has been made of any conversion.[8] However, such open-minded attitudes are definitely far from being the general rule, and Ibn ʻAṭāʾ Allāh himself, in other passages of his works, does not refrain from attacking Jews and Christians because of the alleged doctrinal and moral flaws that are conventionally assigned to them. Moreover, some Sufi masters were directly engaged in dialectical hostility and even physical violence against the "dhimmis," as was the case with Shaykh Ḥasan al-Ṭawīl in Fusṭāṭ (Old Cairo) at the beginning of the thirteenth century, or with many other Sufi masters active in Upper Egypt during the

Mamluk period. One of them was Shaykh Ibn Nūḥ al-Qūṣī (d. 1308), who was charged of inspiring an anti-Coptic pogrom in his town of Qūṣ in 1307 and, while rejecting the accusation, vehemently justified the pogrom itself on allegations that the Egyptian Christians were infringing on the rules of "dhimmi" and were no longer entitled to any special protection (Gril, 1980). No matter how diverse the aforementioned "anti-dhimmis attitude" might be, one point appears to be quite clear: no Sufi of the time seems to have questioned or condemned the inferior juridical and social status assigned to the Jews and Christians by the *sharī'a*, not even Ibn al-'Arabī himself.

As pointed out in two different studies by Eric Geoffroy (1995) and Giuseppe Scattolin (2005), Ibn al-'Arabī showed very different dispositions in his mystical texts and in his juridical ones. For instance, in a well-known legal advice to a Seljukid prince, he advocates for strict implementation of the rules of dhimma upon Jews and Christians. Far from being a kind of occasional "complaisance" to external pressure, this attitude seems to be quite consistent with the inner logics of Ibn al-'Arabī's views on the relations between different religions, at least as it is interpreted by Menia Zainul Bahri. According to Bahri (2012: 461), Ibn al-'Arabī extensively discusses religion in the sense of the "ideal vs. historical" or "esoteric vs. exoteric"; in so doing, Ibn al-'Arabī focuses on the discrepancy of beliefs and religious laws (*sharī'a*) as well as on their transcendental unity, especially in his *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah* and *Fuṣūs al-Ḥikam*, thereby arriving at the conclusion that "the absolute unity of religions may only occur within spiritual, ideal, or transcendental realm (or 'esoteric'), which is beyond the formal form of religions."

As far as historical manifestations of religions are concerned, Ibn al-'Arabī has no hesitation in saying that Islam is the only true religion and that the Islamic laws (*sharī'a*) are the best ones to follow. On the one hand, Ibn al-'Arabī considers that all religious paths may lead to God, so the "path of Muḥammad," as set down in the Qur'an, leads to the specific form of mercy and felicity that God has singled out for the followers of Islam. On the other hand, Ibn al-'Arabī believes that the path of Muḥammad, "because of the all-embracing nature of the Quranic revelation," "includes within itself the paths of all the previous prophets." On this point, Bahri recalls an important quotation from Ibn al-'Arabī (2002: 210): "The Muḥammadan leader chooses the path of Muḥammad and leaves aside the other paths, even though he acknowledges them and has faith in them . . . he traces the attributes of all paths back to it, because Muḥammad's revealed religion is all-inclusive. Hence the property of all the revealed religions has been transferred to his revealed religion. His revealed religion embraces them, but they do not embrace it." In a similar vein, Ibn al-'Arabī (2002: 295) compares Islam and the previous revealed religions to Sun and stars, respectively; in his eyes, "all the revealed religions are light. Among these religions, the revealed religion

of Muḥammad is like the light of the sun among the lights of the stars. When the sun appears, the lights of the stars are hidden, and their lights are included in the light of the sun." According to Ephraïm Herrera (2015), it is quite a pale kind of existence that Ibn al-'Arabī seems ready to accord to the previous revealed religions. Still, Bahri (2012) does not fall far from truth in affirming that this was a much advanced position in Ibn al-'Arabī's time. Nevertheless, due to its clearly Islamo-centric nature, this position might hardly appear as a suitable footing for pluralistic interfaith dialogues in contemporary (inter) national relations.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

On the grounds of an integrated approach to "textual analysis" and "contextual analysis" of doctrines and practices of some great Sufi mystical thinkers—namely, Ibn Sab'īn, Ibn al-'Arabī, and Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh—who could be associated, though with partly different attitudes, to the emergence (if not expression) of the notion of "oneness of reality/unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) during the seventh Islamic century (thirteenth century AC), this chapter comes to the conclusion that the applicability of this notion for the study of Global IR is not free from problems. Indeed, a critical inspection of the heritage of aforementioned Sufi mystical thinkers in Late Ayyubid and Early Mamluk period in Egyptian history discloses that this was the most favorable period for the so-called compromise between Sufism and philosophical Ash'arite theology. However, this period offered a vibrant space for not only interfaith contacts but also interfaith conflicts. Although a "textual analysis" of the notion of "oneness of reality/*waḥdat al-wujūd*" is often associated with another notion, that is, the "unity of religions" (*waḥdat al-adyān*), the "contextual analysis" does not seem to establish any regular connection between the two notions. In other words, the centrality of discussions on "oneness of reality/*waḥdat al-wujūd*" does not confirm a necessary outreach of the reality of "unity of religions/*waḥdat al-adyān*." In fact, the Sufis in the concerned historical period, as in many other historical periods, took varied attitudes on the issue of interfaith contacts, as well as on various more specific mystical themes. But these Sufi trends/doctrines/practices (under the textual label of *tasawwuf*) were uniformly self-defined as "Muslim," and even those Sufi masters who supported the perspective of the "unity of religions/*waḥdat al-adyān*" on a transcendental level (such as Ibn al-'Arabī) did pay attention to the religious divides and socioreligious hierarchies on the concrete level of the world of manifestations. In this light, one faces some doubts on the universal potential of Sufism, inasmuch as even the theory of "unity of religions" seems to focus less on abolishing the boundaries between different

religions and more on expanding the boundaries of one determined religion (i.e., Islam) so as to encompass all other religions. Thus, on a more theoretical level, the contextual analysis undertaken in this chapter warns that Sufism—despite its textual emphasis upon "epistemological monism" (or the idea of "oneness" flowing from a possible subject-object merger)—might reinforce an "Islamo-centric dualism" between subjective-human-inspiration and objective-divine-revelation.

NOTES

1. For Ibn Sab'īn's concept of "oneness of reality," see Abū l-Wafā al-Taftāzānī and Oliver Leaman (2001: 347). For the multifarious works on Ibn al-'Arabī, see the pioneering studies by Miguel Asin Palacios (1871–1944) and Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (1868–1945). Also, an updated bibliographical information is available on the website of "The Muhiddin Ibn al-'Arabī Society": http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/ [Accessed December 20, 2019].
2. On different meanings of the word *ittihad* in the technical language of Islamic mystics, see Houtsma et al. (1993).
3. For details on this issue, see Al-Ghazālī (1957: 4).
4. One may conclude that the mentions of Ibn al-'Arabī in Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh's vast textual production are laudative but quite rare. As far as I was able to judge at the present state of this research, there seems to be no clear indication of a special doctrinal relationship between Ibn al-'Arabī and Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh. Although, in his *Lata'if al-minan*, Ibn 'Aṭā' Allāh accords a high spiritual level to Ibn al-'Arabī and quotes him as an authoritative witness on the existence of the mysterious figure of al-Khāḍir.
5. For an updated survey on this topic, see Cecere (2018).
6. For historical introduction to the theme of "dhimma," see Ashtor (1949) and Cahen (1991). For specific contextualization of "dhimmi" within the Ayyubid period, see Ashtor (1956). On the origins of the practice of "dhimma," see Christ (2006). For some new interpretations on "dhimmi" in early Islam, see Papaconstantinou (2008). For details on the application of "dhimmi" in the medieval Islamicate world, see Fierro and Tolan (2013) and Fenton and Littman (2016).
7. On Ibn Isrāʾīl al-Dimashqī, see Hanif (2002). On Ibn Hūd, see Goldziher (1894) and Kraemer (1992).
8. A "contextual analysis" of this episode is provided in Cecere (2018).

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Chapter 7

The Sufi Rhetoric in Contemporary Turkey: Find Peace in My Hegemony!

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> *There is no worse sickness. . . . O you who are proud, than this pretence of perfection*. (Rumi, 1999)

The proposal of 'Alliance of Civilizations' was first put forward by the president of Spain, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. Soon thereafter, the United Nations (UN) Alliance of Civilizations (from now on 'the Alliance project') was launched. And the then prime minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, immediately joined this UN-backed project as the co-sponsor. Apparently, the Alliance project emerged around 2005 to counter Huntington's infamous 'Clash of Civilizations thesis' which had gained momentum after the 9/11 attacks in the United States.[1] As a restorative initiative against Huntington's thesis, the Alliance project sought to forge a number of intercultural/inter-religious dialogues and cooperation mechanisms so as to heal the past mutual injuries that hurt both Western and non-Western (including Islamic) societies. In the framework of this project, Turkey took the role of a 'bridging country' between the West and the Middle East (Iğsız, 2014). In this context, Rūmī, one of the most celebrated Sufis from the Anatolian soil, was resurrected to give breath to this reconciliation project. While the agenda of the Alliance project was heating up, Erdoğan gave a speech on the 734th *Sebul Arus* in Konya,[2] the city hosting the grave and material heritage of Rūmī:

> The paste of the country, the yeast of this nation will remove all kinds of injustice, extremism, separatism and malicious evils. This society, shaped along with Rūmī's culture of love . . . will protect its unity and . . . maintain its vow of brotherhood. Islam is love, Islam is peace, and Islam is salvation. Islam and terrorism cannot work together. . . . Those who embrace tolerance, endurance, pluralism, unity in multiplicity in our contemporary world should heed the call of Mevlana from centuries ago. . . . The gist of Mevlana's philosophy of life is to

> get rid of mundane chains of the material [and] to reach to the essence of being. How essential is this ambition in our day while the differences are desired to be transformed into an element of conflict . . . and the seeds of conflict among the civilizations are sought to be planted? The peace and justice, compassion and mercy will prevail no matter which centers of evil push how hard against it. . . . The alliance of civilizations is, in fact, an alliance of Rūmī.[3]

The UN-backed Alliance project still operates. However, Erdoğan's promise to rebuild Turkey as a 'bridging country' – that could overcome the extremist tendency to exploit mutual suspicion, fear, and polarization between Muslim countries and Western societies[4] – is still far from fulfilled. Probably, Erdoğan's pledge to liberalize the country did not bring him the popularity he desired. He, therefore, eventually chose to speak the language of the religious segments of a particular community that he thought he knew better than others, that is, the Gülen community.[5] While Erdoğan's collaboration with the Gülen community remains loaded with controversies,[6] this chapter sets out to analyse how Sufism works in present-day Turkey by exemplifying the socio-political activities of two Khalidi-Naqshbandi Sufi communities, namely, Menzil and Ismailağa. Based upon the 'contextual study' of Sufism in Turkey, this chapter pinpoints three reasons why it is somewhat difficult for Sufism to inspire an all-embracing global politics: (1) it is hard to distinguish between the inclusionary epistemological-ontological propositions of Sufism and its historical-political heritage; (2) the inclusionary character of Sufism, in practice and politics, is not unconditional at all; and (3) Sufism is not immune to power-politics; in fact, Sufism has potent means to reproduce power-politics at all levels. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section categorizes the historical traditions of Turkish religious communities under two heads – 'deep-rooted communities' (e.g. Menzil and Ismailağa) and 'rootless communities' (e.g., Gülen). The second section sheds light on the distinctive socio-political behaviour of two deep-rooted religious communities, namely, Menzil and Ismailağa. Finally, the third section explains how the socio-political behaviour of these two deep-rooted religious communities generates 'bordered spaces' which, in turn, delimit the Turkish ambition of a Sufism-inspired global politics (as incorporated in the vision of Alliance of Civilizations).

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN TURKEY: TWO HISTORICAL TRADITIONS

The historical traditions of Turkish religious communities can be divided into two categories. The first category consists of 'deep-rooted communities',

such as Menzil and Ismailağa. The spiritual teachings of these communities (*tariqas*) receive legitimacy from the Sufi tradition that evolved since the first centuries of Islam. The leaders of these communities (*shaikhs*) link themselves to both 'Sufism' (on the basis of chain-of-transmission or *silsilah*) and 'Prophet Muhammad' (on the basis of blood lineage). By contrast, the second category consists of 'rootless communities', such as Gülen, that tend to trivialize the blood lineage of deep-rooted communities and assert their own epistemic authority over the discursive tradition of Islam. Though this chapter mainly focuses upon the deep-rooted communities of Menzil and Ismailağa, it also analyses, to some extent, the mutual interactions among Menzil, Ismailağa, and Gülen.

In this context, the deep-rooted communities are not to be treated as 'traditional', and the rootless communities are not to be treated as 'modern', something that Talal Asad (2009) does while defining Islam as a discursive tradition. Obviously, the rootless communities too benefit from references to Islam (not just deep-rooted communities); and the deep-rooted communities too benefit from the blessings of modernity, especially in the economic and political spheres (not just rootless communities). Thus, this chapter does not use the term modernity as a synonym of contemporary; it, rather, offers an extended scope wherein modernity is not seen as a 'European product', but as a 'contested historical and political context . . . contingent [upon] administrative practices of central bureaucratic states in [the] environments of inter-state competition and commercial expansion' (Islamoğlu, 2014: xi). This definition of modernity is preferred as it facilitates an alternative understanding of religious communities in terms of their political practices.

For instance, the political practices of both deep-rooted and rootless religious communities have contributed to the formation and evolution of modern Turkish state – the Republic of Turkey. Historically, the Khalidiyya branch of Naqshbandi *tariqa*, established by Mawlana Khalid-i Baghdadi (1779–1827) in early nineteenth century (which later gave birth to Menzil and Ismailağa in the mid-twentieth century), played a significant role in declaring the Ottoman Sultan as the central political entity (*khalifa*) of Sunna Islam (Algar, 2007). At present, Menzil and Ismailağa compete with each other as they extend their services to modern Turkish state, especially by supplying the 'vote base' of their followers (*murids*) (also known as their 'prime assets').[7] Moreover, the current legal position of Menzil and Ismailağa as prohibited entities provides them a unique opportunity to re-establish themselves as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and charity foundations. As such, these communities have acquired fresh characters that enable them to question the administrative choices of modern Turkish state. Under these circumstances, the present chapter frames these communities as modernizing agencies. Although they appear as the defenders of the tradition, ironically,

they modernize the tradition itself exactly by defending it under changing circumstances. In other words, the Sufi tradition, through its ways of challenging modernity, serves to legitimize modernity as a 'historical and political context': visibly, the objections of the Sufi tradition to modernity produces modern means of managing the contingencies that the tradition carries into the present context. To summarize, thanks to these communities, modernity and tradition cannot exist in binary opposition to each other.

So, how do the traditional religious communities operate within the parameters of a modern Turkish state? More specifically, how do the traditional religious communities influence the rapid transformation process in major Turkish cities? In order to find answers to these central questions of my PhD thesis,[8] I carried out a series of field visits in Turkish cities starting from 2007. Notably, this point in Turkish history was marked by close ties between Erdoğan's AKP (Justice and Development Party) and the Gülen community. The field visits made it clear that the traditional religious communities – especially, the Gülen community – were speedily transforming into 'gated communities' wherein the followers could live together with the people 'similar to them'. Supposedly, the gated communities were providing them the space to live distant from not only the sins of a secular society but also the poor sections of their own *tariqas*. By leaving the 'traditional/ordinary neighborhoods', they were gentrifying not only the major Turkish cities but also themselves as the new elites of the society. In so doing, these traditional religious communities were losing their homogeneity and internalizing actual class distinctions. And this new way of life strengthened the process of centralization of these traditional religious communities: for instance, instead of providing face-to-face donation to next-door poor, the followers of these communities began to make charity to those associations that were governed by the central bureaucratic organization.

Whenever the followers of these traditional religious communities were reminded about how their stress on 'coherence among similar people' was undermining communal heterogeneity and promoting communal hierarchy, they referred to the rules of the market society in order to explain why and how the traditional religious communities should engage with these rules so as to survive in contemporary world. Quite interestingly, almost all the followers mentioned the Gülen community as a model. The Gülen community had built a prosperous model of corporatism by using their powerful position in the state bureaucracy. Besides, forming a separate businessmen club named TUSKON in 2005, they had opened hundreds of schools, tens of universities, along with university preparation courses that provided them the space to reproduce their community as a pious and educated elite society. It seemed as if the Gülen community had formed a model of inspiration for even deep-rooted religious communities like Menzil and Ismailağa. In

fact, the director of a school founded by Naqshbandi Yahyali Community, who was one of my interviewees, stated how it was getting harder for deep-rooted religious communities to propagate their knowledge/beliefs among present-day students who were located within the market society. But this did not signify the coming together of the viewpoints of Gülen, Menzil, and Ismailağa. Rather, the mutual rivalry between Gülen (as rootless community) and Menzil and Ismailağa (as deep-rooted communities) persisted. While the Gülen community made enormous efforts to keep the deep-rooted religious communities away from the bureaucratic and educational domains they previously dominated, right after the break between the AKP and the Gulenists around 2014, the deep-rooted religious communities blamed the Gulenists for many 'accidents' that had happened to them during the initial years of AKP government.

At this point, it is important to clarify that the Gülen community is recognized as a modern Sufi community, especially outside of Turkey. However, the Gülen community did not originate from the Sufi tradition. In the early periods, the Gülen community relied upon the teachings of Said-i Nursi, who was critical of the Sufi *tariqas* like many Turkish Islamists in the first half of the twentieth century. Because of the emergencies caused by the Western attack on the Muslim world, Nursi stressed the need to save the faith, not the spiritual education (Kurt, 2009). Since the late 1990s, the Gülen community replaced the teachings of Nursi with the Gülen's books that contain numerous references to Rūmī and Ibn al-Arabī. But one might argue that the Gülen community included these references only to embrace the liberal discourse that had become popular in Turkey for a short period towards the late 1990s. Likewise, one might argue that Erdoğan joined the UN-backed Alliance project only to support the lobbying activities of Gülen community that had functioned as the 'soft power' for Erdogan's AKP.[9] Since this chapter intends to perform a contextual study of Sufism in Turkey so as to gather its implications for a Sufism-inspired global politics, the next section exclusively focuses upon the functioning of the two Turkish deep-rooted Sufi communities that share Khalidi-Naqshbandi origins, namely, Menzil and Ismailağa.

DEEP-ROOTED RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN TURKEY: MENZIL AND ISMAILAĞA

Can Sufism, as a non-Western intellectual resource, possibly motivate a more inclusionary global politics (as embodied in the vision of Alliance of Civilizations)? In order to examine if Sufism has this capacity, let us analyse how the Khalidi-Naqshbandi Sufi *tariqas* of Menzil and Ismailağa act within the Turkish political domain.[10] Among all the Turkish Sufi *tariqas*, Menzil and

Ismailağa are the most visible ones as they are ever more politically involved with the present AKP government, especially after the failed coup attempt in 2016.[11] At the moment, both the *tariqas* seem keen to establish their educational centres (*madrasas*): Menzil's *madrasas* in Kurdistan (i.e., Turkey and Syria) are more collaborative in nature, whereas Ismailağa's *madrasas* are set up not only in Turkey but also in several other Muslim countries. Both the *tariqas* are mentioned in public discussions on the issues of secularism and Islamism as they remain incorporated within the existing bureaucratic structures: Menzil in security and health sectors, and Ismailağa in religious affairs administration. Menzil encourages the boys to go for higher education, whereas Ismailağa discards modern education and prohibits both the boys and girls from receiving higher education except in the Islamic sciences.[12] Thanks to their liberal approach to education, the political and bureaucratic connections of Menzil are far more intense than that of Ismailağa.

Many scholars label Menzil and Ismailağa as apolitical religious communities. Nonetheless, these *tariqas* are part of the Khalidi-Naqshbandi tradition that has a consistent history of being politically active not only at the national level but also at the international level. During its modernization period, the Ottoman state used this Khalidi-Naqshbandi tradition to build spiritual boundaries against Iranian Shia in the East (Varol, 2011) and Russian expansionism in the North (Weismann, 2007). Later, the same Khalidi-Naqshbandi tradition worked as necessary establishments for maintaining the loyalty of Sunnah Kurds. However, this did not assure a prolonged record of mutual trust between the *tariqas* and the Ottoman state (Mardin, 1993).[13] Rather, all the *tariqas* were banned after the foundation of modern Turkish state (i.e., the Republic of Turkey). Although this ban caused a severe loss in the status of the *tariqas*, this did not bring an end to them (Kara, 2009; Pekasil, 2014). On the contrary, since these *tariqas* were banned, they began to function as focal points for those people who were not included or could not be included in the state-led modernization project. In other words, these *tariqas* offered alternative trajectories to the state-led modernization project. Even when these *tariqas* were banned, they retained political legitimacy by maintaining a discourse whereby they claimed that the state secretly supported them. This discourse served two purposes: first, it compensated for the ambiguity stemming from the legal ban; second, it warned the followers against any sort of anti-state activity.

Since the 1970s, Menzil has been associated with a nationalist political party called MHP. Ismailağa, on the other hand, presents itself as a political agent whose mission is to break the power of the Greek Patriarchate in Fener: to prevent the Greek Patriarchate from becoming ecumenical, Ismailağa urges its followers not to sell their property in Fener (located nearby Carsamba). During the economic crises of the 1990s, both the *tariqas* were able

to prevent their followers from driving away on the wheels of neoliberal market mechanism: to do so, these *tariqas* implemented their own 'solidarity economic practices' which provided assistance to their followers in repaying debts and making new investments with the solidarity cash-boxes.[14] Indeed these solidarity economic practices have flourished during the post-crises period. Today, Menzil has its own 'All Industrialists and Businessmen's Association' called TUMSIAD. Also the ministry of health and the ministry of interior bureaucracies have a considerable number of Menzil followers. Certainly, Ismailağa does not enjoy a comparable presence in the state bureaucracy, but it has a vast network of associations run by small-scale merchants and investors who operate at national as well as international levels.

In this context, it is important to bear in mind that the multiple Sufi sects (like Menzil and Ismailağa) share a collective legacy of the Islamic tradition: as such, there is no 'original Sufism'. In fact, religion is what/how the religious groups believe/perform. Similarly, Sufism is what/how the Sufi sects believe/perform. By illustrating what/how Menzil and Ismailağa believe/perform in Turkey, this chapter proceeds to argue that it is not easy to discern the philosophical essence of Sufism from its political heritage. In the case of Menzil, one can pay attention to the ritual of 'rabita' – that is, the spiritual process of connecting the follower (*murid*) and the teacher (*shaikh*). In the case of Ismailağa, one can examine the ritual of 'dress-code'. In what follows, an attempt has been made to show how these simple rituals work as 'boundary-setting practices', thereby creating multiple 'bordered spaces' (or estranged islands) within the larger modern nation-state of Turkey. While carrying out these rituals, both the *tariqas* roughly say: 'Come, whoever you are . . . however, if you decide to stay with us, then you would find no other place to go'. Since the *tariqas* are not only spiritual bodies but also political bodies, they function like 'panoptic institutions' that govern their followers in all the domains of life – familial, social, cultural, economic, and political.

Menzil: The Ritual of 'Rabita'

Menzil's influence cross- cuts the ethnic and political axes in Turkey. And this is because Menzil offers the remarkable service of providing relief from different sorts of addiction: mainly, drug, alcohol, and gambling. A journalist from *Soma Haber Daily*, Tunay (2015), reports: 'Menzil specifically concerns with addictions, which is the biggest problem of the world, of Turkey, of Manisa, in short, of modern society and of humanity'. Menzil organizes sessions for addiction therapy; the addicts, who stay with Menzil for three days, spend time here without being marginalized, and all the costs are covered by the NGOs and philanthropists; around 15,000 of the 50,000 people who visit Menzil every day are addicts.[15] In order to develop a faith-based

rehabilitation method for overcoming addiction, Menzil has established the Kardelen Rehabilitation Center. Estimating the working of this centre, Kızmaz and Çevik (2016: 328) quote: 'The treatment here is different than in other places. There is no medicine, but *rabita*, *salat*, and *hatma*. The hospital is like a hotel, you stay for a month, and then you go. Our hosts let us stay here as long as we want. They say, leave when you feel confident'.

The history of *rabita* goes back to the first period of Naqshibandi Sufism (Le Gall, 2005). In fact, there are centuries-old debates about whether *rabita* should be considered as falsehood (*shirk*) or reward (*sawab*) (Weissmann, 2007). The term comes from the Arabic word '*rabt*' which means 'connecting tightly' or 'forming a nexus'. By *rabita*, a follower (*murid*) gets connected to the teacher (*shaikh*) and the community. Both Menzil and Ismailağa implement the ritual of *rabita* in more or less similar manner. In fact, *rabita* is only one of the eight stages in the initiation ritual of a follower. The initiation ritual is arranged in accordance with the idea of bodily and spiritual cleaning: ablution (*abdest*), body ablution (*gusul*), prayer for asking God's guidance (*salat al-istikharah*), penitence (*tovbe*), praying for forgiveness (*istighfar*), reciting *surat-al Fatiha*, *rabita* to the teacher (*shaikh*), and then *rabita* to death (i.e. thinking of death). This gradual cleansing symbolically purifies the follower before he or she reaches the desired destination (*menzil*) and becomes ready for a clean start to a brand new life. After the first experiment in the presence of a teacher (*shaikh*), the ritual of *rabita* becomes a daily homework for the follower: it takes at least fifteen minutes after the evening prayer (*salat*); in the first five minutes, the follower meditates to get out of the world; in the second five minutes, the follower gets out of herself or himself; and in the last five minutes, the follower becomes ready to get her or his share from *rabita*.

At the first glance, the ritual of *rabita* gives the impression of a simple person-to-person meditation. However, being central to the lives of the followers and their community, it also exercises a larger socio-political impact. I will describe how it functions as a tool to set boundaries between the community and the rest of the world through the stories of two young women whom I interviewed: Yeşim and Fatma (names are not original). Yeşim was born in Germany into a secular family and fell in love with her husband in her mid-twenties. They immediately decided to get married, and the husband's family approved. Since Yeşim did not ask for any expensive gifts or wedding party, the husband's family was more than happy. A few months later, Yeşim's mother-in-law asked her to receive a lesson (*tesbih*) from Menzil. At the start, Yeşim thought it was a way to adapt to her husband's family and agreed. She even studied what to do before practising her first lesson. She narrates:

> For me, it was something exotic, and that exoticism belonged to my new family. I thought it was good to experience it. Then they told me what to do. Since I was

> a woman, I had to receive my lesson (*tesbih*) from a lady initiated by Menzil. They told me that I should take a cold shower (*gusul*) to show the sincerity of my faith. Then, I should make penitence (*tovbe*). The shower and the *tovbe* were OK. However, when it came to crying for my sins, I got a feeling that they asked me to cry for who I was. It disturbed me, but I tried. While trying, I felt even worse. After a while, I slept, and in the morning I told them that it was not the right time for me. However, something bizarre happened afterward. They started to exclude me from everything. When they came to my home to see their son, they acted as if I was not there. In the first days following my failed attempt to be a part of Menzil, they kept asking if I would try it again. And I kept responding that I would when I would feel ready. After a couple of weeks, they stopped asking. Now, I know I will never be ready for Menzil because I don't want to be like them. Now, I don't care if I am a true member of the family. But they make me feel as if I am half-human.

In the case of Yeşim, the *tariqa* establishes a virtual border within the family. The initial welcoming attitude eventually turns into an exclusionary practice. Although the *shaikh* and the *tariqa* are thousands of miles away from where Yeşim lives, she feels their solid existence as if they breathe in the same house. Another young woman, Fatma, tells how connecting with Menzil eventually separated her parents from their extended family. Fatma is a university student in her twenties. As a student, she had spent a large part of her life living in the dormitories provided by Menzil. However, she later decided to leave Menzil as she became more and more critical about its political attitudes. She informs:

> Until last years I did not have any doubt about Menzil. Although I had several discussions with the older-sisters (*ablalar*) in the dormitories, I continued to stay. However, when I started to think there was something wrong with Menzil, I came to recognize several issues I did not consider before. First, I recognized that my family was too small. I mean, my father and mother didn't see even their siblings because they did not attend Menzil. Then I put everything together and saw that it was Menzil that had separated my parents from their families. Whoever in their families denied believing in *Gavs* (i.e. the Menzil leaders), my parents would call them 'sick'. 'He is sick, unable to believe'. In the past, it was not something serious for me as I thought it was just a phrase and it did not mean a real sickness. But now, I see that they seriously use this term. For instance, they told me that I was infected with sickness because I met my non-believer friends.

At the outset, it seems there is no relation between '*rabita* as a technique of bondage' and '*rabita* as a practice of exclusion'. However, the boundary-setting function of *rabita* eventually manifests itself. By submitting to Menzil, the followers distinguish themselves not only from non-believers

but also from those Muslims who see *rabita* as a questionable practice. The ambivalent heritage of *rabita* asks the followers to choose their side, and, in so doing, creates boundaries between the followers and non-followers. But that is not the end. The ritual of *rabita* creates boundaries also among the followers: according to Fatma, 'the robe of *Gavs* (i.e. the Menzil leaders) seems to everyone in a different color. And that color gives an idea about how strong is your *rabita* with your teacher (*shaikh*)'. Thus, the stronger is your *rabita*, the higher is your position in the hierarchy of followers (*murids*).

Ismailağa: The Ritual of 'Dress-code'

The Ismailağa community calls itself the advocate of the 'Age of Bliss' (*Asr-i Saadet*) and, therefore, believes in revitalizing the practices, lifestyle, and even traditional costume of the mythical golden age of the Prophet Muhammad and the first caliphs (Aviv, 2018). With regard to traditional costume, the Ismailağa community prescribes the following regulations: 'For every Muslim, it is a prerequisite to wear clothes that would protect them from cold and warm weather in a way that covers their bodies. For men, the skirts of these clothes should be long enough to cover up to half of their legs; for women, up to their feet, and their fingertips. Men's clothes should not be red or yellow, but black or white. These colors are relevant. The green color is also suitable for *sunnah*'.[16] In addition, the Ismailağa community promotes beard and turban for men and headscarf (*chador*) for women. According to a popular website run by Ismailağa, even walking in the prescribed dress-code is equivalent to 'teaching Islam' (*amr bil maruf*). Defending this dress-code against the oppressive *laicite* in modern Turkish state, Mahmud Efendi (2012) elaborates:

> The entire world is against this turban. They are against your *chador*. Since these are the clothes God love, they provide you a grandeur look. When you wear them, God helps you from his invisible wealth. When you leave them God gives up helping you. Don't be afraid of anybody, don't be shy.[17]

Rather than discussing if the Ismailağa dress-code is truly Islamic or not, let us analyse how this dress-code works in the public sphere. Three distinct cases can be discussed. The 'first case' is related to the current AKP government's appointment of Ilhan Bakanlioglu, an Ismailağa follower, as the governor of Sakarya. The ceremony that the Ismailağa community organized to welcome the new governor was striking. A crowd of local Ismailağa followers sang Islamic phrases like *lailahe illallah Allah-u-Akbar* and *ya Allah bismillah Allah-u-Akbar*. It was something that had happened for the first time. Quite surprisingly, none of these local Ismailağa followers took part in

the ceremony in accordance with the prescribed dress-code. Later, the new governor issued a statement whereby he claimed that those who took part in the ceremony were not Ismailağa followers; in fact, they were those citizens who were injured while protecting the AKP government against the coup attempt; supposedly, those citizens included the supporters of the nationalist political party MHP and the secularist political party CHP.[18] Since the brother of the new governor is a prominent preacher of the Ismailağa *tariqa*, very few people seemed to believe this statement. Then again, the 'second case' revolves around the investigation started by senior army officers of Isparta against a young soldier who was performing compulsory military service. As the young soldier was leaving his army post in order to spend his one-day vacation, he wore a 'robe' and 'shalwar' (i.e., typical Ismailağa costume). According to the official minutes, a military commander urged the young man that he could not leave the barracks in such clothes. The young man replied that he did not have other clothes as he was a follower of the Ismailağa *tariqa*. He also claimed that his clothes were part of his freedom of religion. The military commander accepted his point and allowed him to go. Later, an investigation was initiated also against the military commander who had allowed this 'unlawful act' to happen.[19] Last but not least, the 'third case' highlights the unprecedented media attention drawn by famous football player Aykut Demir who at first played for Trabzonspor and then played for Erzurumspor, a town in Eastern Anatolia, one of the strongholds of Turkish nationalism and conservative religiosity. Although Aykut is a footballer, he is also known for fighting with arms and fists. Not surprisingly, he did not have a very good reputation in the media. But when he decided to join the Ismailağa *tariqa* around 2015, he grew his beard and began to follow the Ismailağa dress-code.[20] Very soon, Aykut Demir became one of the most photographed footballers in the field. While Aykut Demir's popularity increased, Ismailağa also managed to extend its boundaries among football fans.

The common feature of all these three cases is that the Ismailağa dress-code makes this *tariqa* visible not only on the streets but also in the media. Whenever a follower becomes a subject of controversy because of what he or she wears on the streets, the coverage of this controversy in the media infinitely multiplies the power of the Ismailağa *tariqa*. In the case of the governor, one can sense an unspoken negotiation between the *tariqa* and the government. In the past ten years, with the acceleration of socio-political rivalry among the religious communities, the orthodox attitude of Ismailağa community has softened to some extent: for instance, in the aforementioned case, the followers welcomed the governor but did not wear their traditional costumes; instead, they recited all-encompassing Islamic verses in Arabic. The way they expressed their power, they conveyed two messages – 'yes, we are changing' and 'yes, this change brings us more power'. In all these

cases, the strictness of the dress-code declares the distinguished identities of Ismailağa followers: as such, the identities of Ismailağa followers are to be separated from the identities of others (mainly non-believers and the followers of other Khalidi-Naqshbandi *tariqas*). But, quite paradoxically, at the same time as the dress-code declares the distinguished (privileged?) identities of the followers, it also stigmatizes the followers: when the followers receive greater publicity (on the streets or in the media), the virtual territory of the *tariqa* expands; however, when the virtual territory of the *tariqa* expands, it becomes the only bordered space where the followers can live in. The next section discusses how these bordered spaces (or bordered communities) create severe challenges for the Turkish ambition of a Sufism-inspired global politics.

BORDERED COMMUNITIES AND THE TURKISH AMBITION OF A SUFISM-INSPIRED GLOBAL POLITICS

In order to fully comprehend the present status of Sufism in Turkish politics (and, by extension, in global politics), it is important to realize why the Khalidi-Naqshbandi tradition became popular among the ruling elites in olden times. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the Khalidi-Naqshibandi sects spread across the Ottoman land because of the charismatic leadership of Mevlana Khalid who played an active role in reconciling the *sharī'a* with Sufism (Varol, 2011). Additionally, the Khalidi-Naqshibandi sects, unlike the other sects such as Qadiri and Barzanji, eliminated the requirement of blood lineage for recruiting leaders/teachers (*shaikhs*). This organizational liberalization allowed them to have a wider network: the leaders/teachers (*shaikhs*), who were attached to their *tariqas* through *rabita*, began to exert influence over a wide range of socio-political issues at the local/provincial and national levels. But after Mevlana Khalid's death in 1827, the internal competition/conflict among *shaikhs* resulted in the disintegration of these *tariqas*. Nevertheless, this did not reduce the popularity of these *tariqas*. Since the followers were not connected to one central *shaikh*, but to several decentralized *shaikhs*, usually the one geographically closest to them, the competition/conflict among *shaikhs* did not curtail the overall power of these *tariqas*. In other words, the autonomy of *shaikhs* made it possible for these *tariqas* to retain their spiritual and political power (Bruinessen, 1992).

At the present historical juncture, these Khalidi-Naqshibandi *tariqas* continue to preserve their autonomy. In order to preserve their autonomy, these *tariqa*s constitute their own imagined communities via small initiation rituals and codes of conduct. Even if these small rituals – for instance, 'rabita' in Menzil and 'dress-code' in Ismailağa – constitute trivial aspects of the lives

of the followers, they oblige the followers to embrace the virtual borders of their *tariqas*: in so doing, they separate the followers from not only the followers of other *tariqas* but also the outside world. And the same rituals create hierarchies even among the followers of the same *tariqa*: it is noteworthy that both 'rabita' and 'dress-code' serve as the criteria for hierarchical distribution of socio-political capital (surplus) among the followers. Thus, in practice, the competition/conflict between (and within) the *tariqas* carries on. The *tariqas* contest with each other and with other religious communities to take part in Turkey's domestic and international politics. For instance, Menzil demands to play a facilitating role with regard to the Kurdish issue: markedly, Menzil enjoys an influence over the Kurdish tribes with whom the Turkish state has troubles since a long time.[21] By contrast, Ismailağa, with its fifty-three *madrasas* established in thirty Muslim countries across the globe, offers to serve as the 'soft power' of the Turkish state, just as the Gülen community did until 2014.[22] One might wonder whether both the Sufi *tariqas* (i.e. Menzil and Ismailağa) are guided by an imperialistic rhetoric that calls back the Ottoman Empire as the protector/leader of the Muslim world. Whether this rhetoric is realistic or not is the subject of another discussion.

But then, how do Sufi *tariqas* contribute to the Turkish agenda of Alliance of Civilizations? Or how do Sufi *tariqas* sustain the Turkish aspiration of a Sufism-inspired global politics? Generally speaking, Sufi *tariqas* have an ability to go outside the national and ethnic borders as we know today. Yet Sufi *tariqas*, as this chapter has tried to illustrate, do not refrain from settling inside the communitarian borders and obtaining power from them. This paradoxical scenario accurately explains the dilemmas of why Sufism may (or may not) stimulate a more inclusive global politics: for instance, a more inclusive global politics as emphasized by the Alliance project. To be sure, from a philosophical perspective, it is hard to deny the appeal of Rūmī's cliché 'come, whoever you are', particularly in today's world which is experiencing one of the biggest refugee crises of human history. Also, it is difficult to refute Ibn al-Arabī's concept of *wahādat al-wujūd* ('unity of being'), especially in contemporary times when the environmental degradation is indisputably recognized as a global problem. Both Rūmī and Ibn al-Arabī derived insights from the socio-political conditions of their era to generate universal messages about the inclusionary understanding of Islam. However, it is important to recall that these universal messages also invited resistance from both within and without the Islamic tradition. As such, the current content of Sufism includes not only these universal messages but also resistance against these universal messages.[23] The complicated political landscape of Turkey – wherein different political actors use different meanings of Islam to produce different legitimizing discourses – is indeed a classic example of how religion-based philosophy cannot help the world to become a more peaceful

place. In point of fact, the bringing back of Islamic language into contemporary global politics might mean revoking the historical clashes within Islam too. It is crucial to realize that Sufism is not a philosophical abstraction that could be detached from the political composition it unfolds in its historical adventure. Thus, the understanding of Sufism only as a philosophy, and not as a set of political practices situated within particular historical contexts, could have severe consequences. Any religion becomes a religion only when people believe in it; otherwise, it is not a religion but just a knowledge-form. However, believing and knowing are completely different intellectual exercises. At times, believing (without knowing) is harmful to the existing human conditions. Therefore, instead of inquiring about how could the Sufi 'knowledge-form' inspire a more inclusive global politics, one can reframe the question and ask: how could the Sufi 'belief-form' breed a conflict-ridden exclusionary politics? Presumably, asking such a question is also a critical part of imagining a Sufism-inspired theory of international relations.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

A systematic analysis of the socio-political orientations of Khalidi-Naqshbandi religious communities in Turkey essentially unveils the tensions between two understandings of Sufism: (1) Sufism as a philosophy and (2) Sufism as a political heritage (or history). While Sufism as a philosophy asserts the unavoidable 'unity of being' (or 'oneness of reality'), Sufism as a political heritage (history) is capable of promoting bordered spaces with divided identities, that is, the experience of 'separation of beings' (or 'many-ness of reality'). Of course, the philosophy of Sufism is abundant, and so is its political heritage. As such, both can be evoked to forge alternative grounds for challenging not only the Eurocentric way of 'theorizing' global politics, but also the Eurocentric way of 'practicing' global politics. However, if the philosophy of Sufism is evoked as a non-Eurocentric knowledge-form, but the history of Sufism is neglected as a non-Eurocentric belief-form, then the resulting theoretical-practical outline of a Sufism-inspired global politics is bound to be nothing but a 'pretence of perfection'. Furthermore, one needs to be wary of the rhetorical deceits of Sufism in global politics, that is, those instances wherein Sufi ideologues (such as Rūmī and Ibn al-Arabī) are reawakened only to cover up an orthodox realpolitik that aims to achieve nothing other than the fulfilment of power-based self-interests. If the race for fulfilment/maximization of power-based self-interests endures, then it is not a justifiable expression of Sufism-inspired global politics; it is, rather, the historical reproduction of the same orthodox realpolitik, albeit disguised under the philosophical mask of Sufism.

NOTES

1. After the 9/11 attacks in 2001, Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davies (2004: 53–54) asked: 'Is it surprising that many in the West see today's war on terrorism as the prelude to a renewed clash of civilizations? The question is in every newspaper and magazine. It did not need the right-wing American political scientist Huntington to pose the question – the idea has never actually gone away'.

2. On 17 December 1273, Rūmī passed away in Konya, Turkey. Ever since, Rūmī's followers have commemorated that day as *Sebul Arus*, literally meaning 'wedding day' or 'the night of the union'.

3. The content of this speech was published in an article titled 'Bu toplum kardeşlik yeminini bozmayacaktır'. Available at http://www.mynet.com/haber/guncel/bu-toplum-kardeslik-yeminini-bozmayacaktir-302549-1 [Accessed 17 December 2007].

4. For a full account of the Turkish official stance on the Alliance agenda, see 'The Alliance of Civilizations Initiative', Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey. Available at http://www.mfa.gov.tr/the-alliance-of-civilizations-initiative.en.mfa [Accessed 1 September 2019].

5. In the initial years at office, Erdoğan's political party AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* or Justice and Development Party) worked in close partnership with the Gülen community led by US-based Fethullah Gülen. In this partnership, Erdoğan's AKP undertook the governmental responsibility, whereas the Gülen community enjoyed power gains from bureaucratic domain by supplying skilled human resources. However, after the 2007 presidential election, the two partners developed serious disagreements over distribution of public resources. Erdoğan's AKP wanted to implement a political-economy that could sustain its popularity, and in order to do so, it needed to gain control over the bureaucratic apparatus that was dominated by the Gülen community. In 2016, Erdoğan even accused Fethullah Gulen of plotting a coup against his government. While some condemn the Gülen community for having 'global, apocalyptic ambition' and 'cultish hierarchy' (Akyol, 2016), the others deny Fethullah Gülen's rumoured involvement in the failed coup attempt, and the opinion that the Gülen community is pushing a cult-style movement; rather, many consider the Gülen community as an 'apolitical, more Sufi, mystical and social tradition' (Fuller, 2017).

6. Among the many scandals involving the role of Gülen community in Turkish bureaucracy, the prominent ones are the KPSS exams (2010) and the university exams (2012). Allegedly, the members of Gülen community stole the questions and distributed them to their supporters. Although Erdoğan's government managed to cancel the KPSS exams which concerned smaller number of people, it was not able to cancel the university exams which affected around 1.5 million families. Both these corruption cases are repeatedly mentioned while disseminating the anti-Gülenist discourse in today's Turkish politics.

7. Akyeşilmen and Özcan (2014) drew a table indicating which religious community voted for which party. Their table does not include Ismailağa, but it does include Menzil. According to this table, Menzil voted for MHP in 1973 and 1977 elections,

for ANAP in 1983, for RP in 1987 and 1991, for RP/BBP and BBP in 1995 and 1999, for AKP/DP in 2002 and 2007, and for AKP in 2011. They voted for the AKP and MHP in the two elections that happened in 2015.

8. For detailed information about this PhD thesis, see Çavdar (2014).

9. According to Ilhami Güler (2017), a professor of Theology, the Gülen community is an eclectic community merging Naqshbandi-Khalidi lineage with Ibn al-Arabī's traditions. He refers to this particular amalgam as 'Eshari drinks Ibn Arabi'; for him, this particular amalgam is 'messianic, saga-oriented, mythological, hypocritical, and political theosophist'.

10. Hofer (2015) opines that the investigation of the institutional structure of Sufi *tariqas* can help to develop a broad understanding of their functions within the society.

11. For grasping the new-found relationship between the religious communities (such as Menzil and Ismailağa) and the state in AKP's New Turkey, see Öztürk (2019).

12. Ahmet Mahmut Unlu (aka Cubbeli Ahmed), a follower of Ismailağa, confessed that he was against compulsory school education as it prevented the students from memorizing Qur'an. He added that he was not against school education *per se*, but the secular textbooks related to school education needed to be checked on the basis of Islamic premises. For details, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbLxOSmNQfY [Accessed 2 October 2019].

13. Kılıç (2006) analyses why Khalidi-Naqshbandi Sufi *shaikhs* were frequently exiled regardless of their support to the official ideology of the Ottoman state.

14. One of the first solidarity cash-boxes was founded by Gumushanevi, a legendary Khalidi-Naqshbandi Sufi *shaikh* of the ninetteth century. He initiated this box as a protest against the formation of the Ottoman Bank (Yildirim, 2009). For a comprehensive article on the solidarity economy created by religious communities, see Çavdar (2019).

15. In 2014, the Bandirma Music and Performing Arts Association, founded by the Roma people, sent about forty Roma youngsters to Menzil through the AKP Balikesir Deputies Cemal Öztaylan and Ahmet Edip Uğur. The president of the Association, Feridun Demiroğubel, made a press declaration to thank the AKP state officials for their responsiveness in this matter. For complete information, see the news article 'Alkolu birakmak icin Menzil'e gittiler', *Ilkhaber Daily*, 13 February 2014. Available at http://ilkhabergazetesi.tv/alkolu-birakmak-icin-menzile-gittiler/ [Accessed 4 September 2019].

16. For details, visit the website https://ihvanlar.net/2012/08/04/giyim-ve-kiyafet/ [Accessed 5 September 2019].

17. For details, visit the website https://ihvanlar.net/2012/02/04/mahmud-efendi-hazretlerinin-sarik-sakal-aski/ [Accessed 5 September 2019].

18. For details, see the news article 'Sakarya Valisi Balkanlıoğlu'ndan tekbir açıklaması', *Birgun*, 24 July 2017. Available at https://www.birgun.net/haber detay/sakarya-valisi-balkanlioglu-ndan-tekbir-aciklamasi-171345.html [Accessed 5 September 2019].

19. For details, see the news article 'Kışlada İsmailağa kıyafetine soruşturma', CNNTURK, 30 August 2017. Available at https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/kislada-Ismailağa-kiyafetine-sorusturma [Accessed 5 September 2019].

20. For details, see the news article 'Ismailağa Cemaati'ne katilan Trabzonsporlu Aykut cuppe ve sarikla fotograf cektirdi', T24, 10 November 2015. http://t24.com.tr/haber/ Ismailağa-cemaatine-katilan-trabzonsporlu-aykut-cuppe-ve-sarikla-fotograf-cektirdi,315981 [Accessed 5 September 2019].

21. However, it is necessary to add that the role that Menzil wants to play is far from proposing an equal citizenship between the Turks and the Kurds. Menzil, rather, suggests a negotiation that could provide a few privileges to the Kurdish tribal leaders so that the Kurds could be convinced to accept the given inequalities. Before the parliamentary elections in June 2015, in my capacity as a journalist, I spoke to the manager of the Samarkand Foundation of Menzil *tariqa*. He said: 'We will give some of our votes to the MHP and some of them to the AKP. *Inshallah*, we will witness they make coalition in the coming period'. The AKP won the election but could not get enough votes to set up a single-party government. The negotiations did not conclude with a coalition. In November 2015, the election was renewed and the AKP seized the majority. Since then, the AKP got the support of the MHP on several issues.

22. Like other Khalidi-Naqshbandi Sufi *tariqas*, Ismailağa considers Sufism as a way to reach the *sharī'a*.

23. Both Menzil and Ismailağa are critical about Ibn al-Arabī and Rūmī's conceptualizations of Sufism. For instance, they see the philosophy of *wahādat al-wujūd* ('oneness of reality') as a form of blasphemy. The spiritual leader of the Gülen movement, Said Nursi, mentions Ibn al-Arabī with regard to his 'alleged abilities of communication with the dead and unborn' (Bruckmayr, 2008) and refers to Rūmī primarily when he asserts his opinions concerning 'inter-religious tolerance'. Likewise, Erdogan refers to Ibn al-Arabī as a divine prognosticator foretelling the role of Turks in world history as the founder of the Ottoman Empire. Noticeably, Erdogan's claims are reiterated by a popular Turkish TV series *Dirilis Ertugrul* (*Resurrection Ertugrul*).

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Chapter 8

"Textual-Contextual Tension" in the Sufi Study of Global International Relations: Lessons from Sudan

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My heart has become capable of every form
It is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks;
And a temple for idols and the pilgrim's Ka'ba and the tables of the Tora and the book of the Koran.
I follow the religion of Love: whatever way Love's camels take,
that is my religion and my faith. (Ibn al-Arabī, 1911, 19: 67)

The religious activity of Sufism is not carried out in a vacuum: there is always a historical context attached to it. According to the Sudanese Sufi writer and politician Mahmud Muhammad Taha (d. 1985), when the Prophet migrated from Mecca to Medina, his move from one historical context to another led to a change in the reading of Islamic philosophical texts, namely, the change from "Meccan Qur'an" to "Medinan Qur'an." Likewise, whenever a Sufi tradition moves from one historical context to another, it tends to assign new meanings to its long-established philosophical texts. Many a time, this dialectical relationship between "historical context" and "philosophical text" generates a tension. While Sufi history primarily focuses upon the Sufi practices of a specific temporal-spatial context, Sufi philosophy adds new meanings to the transcendental elements of Sufi texts. For sure, the Sufi practices of a specific temporal-spatial context become questionable when they disregard the transcendental elements of Sufi texts. For instance, Taha became highly critical of those Sufi practices that, after the Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medina, demanded obligatory obeisance to orthodox leaders (*shaikhs*) and showed rigid oppositions to change. Yet this did not adversely affect Taha's philosophical commitment to the transcendental elements of Sufi texts. In fact, Taha cautiously endorsed a few ethical values that he gleaned from Sufi texts: mainly, the values of social-altruism, solidarity, compassion of

the self for the other/s, and humanism. Taha considered these ethical values as valid grounds for an alternative Sufi intervention in international relations (IR). Since the "textual-contextual tension"—or the moment of incongruity between Sufi history and Sufi philosophy—is frequently encountered in the contemporary Sufi study of Global IR, this chapter seeks to draw some lessons from Taha whose intellectual and political endeavors in Sudan sought to resolve this tension. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides a brief overview of Taha's experiences with the Sufi approach to Islam. The second section elaborates upon how Taha's Sufi approach culminated into the "Second Message of Islam," that is, a philosophical-textual variant of the Qur'an which differentiates between the historical contexts of Mecca and Medina. Finally, the third section explicates how Taha intended to apply his Second Message of Islam for the purpose of resolving conflicts in IR, especially the Arab-Israeli conflict that continues to disturb the dynamics of global politics.

TAHA'S LIFE: AN EXPERIMENT WITH THE SUFI APPROACH TO ISLAM

Taha was born around 1909 in a small Sudanese town of Rufaa, which was under British colonial rule since 1880 and gained its official independence in 1956. He studied engineering at the Gordon Memorial College, specializing in irrigation. During his studies at the college, he extensively read the works of Marx, Lenin, Russel, and Shaw and thus was exposed to modern socio-political ideas that would be found later in his ideological doctrines. After graduating in 1936, he worked in his profession for more than a decade. In 1945, he founded the Republican Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Jumuriyyin*), a small reformist party that opposed the presence of the British colonizers in Sudan. After Sudan's independence in 1954, the Republican Brotherhood frequently challenged the ruling party as well as the Muslim Brotherhood, which had begun to attract fresh followers. The name of Taha's movement, which was open to both Muslims and Christians, was probably chosen to play up the formidable differences between the two and accentuate the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood was a party for Muslims only (Magnarella, 1982). Taha faced growing religious and political antagonism, which led to a series of arrests, imprisonment, and finally execution in 1985 by the Ja'afar al-Numeiri regime on charges of apostasy.[1]

The last straw was a leaflet published in 1984 on Christmas Day in which Taha protested the government's strict implementation of the *sharī'a* law, also in Sudan's Christian south: "It is futile for anyone to claim that a Christian person is not adversely affected by the implementation of the

sharī'a law. It is not enough for a citizen today to merely enjoy freedom of worship," wrote Taha. "He is entitled to the full rights of a citizen in total equality with all other citizens. . . . The rights of southern [Christian] citizens are not provided for in the *sharī'a* law but rather in Islam at the level of fundamental Qur'anic revelation"[2] (strikingly, Taha's Sufi attitude gives a fatal blow to the pervert discriminatory practices against the "dhimmis" or Christians and Jews of the Islamicate states; for details, see chapter 6). Taha's opposition to the implementation of the *sharī'a* law was combined with an openly anti-sectarian approach (*ta'ifiyya*). He remained unrepentant to the end, as in January 1985 he was brought out to the courtyard of the prison in northern Khartoum before a crowd of onlookers who cursed and jeered him. A warder who accompanied him to the gallows related that Taha strode to his death with his head held high. Judith (1996: 12), then a reporter for *The New York Times*, who was present at the execution, wrote that before being blindfolded and his body put in a sack, "his eyes were defiant; his mouth firm. He showed no hint of fear." Following the execution, Taha's writings were banned and Republican activists were detained in Umduram and other cities. While Taha's execution served as deterrence to his followers, spurring some of them to recant their views and regain their freedom, it also testified to their dead leader's deep commitment to the democratic cause. The fact that al-Numeiri's rule collapsed only four months after Taha's execution, a period marked by public unrest, mass demonstrations, and strikes, reinforced the powerful impact of Taha on Sudanese public sphere. In death, Taha became something rare in contemporary Islam: a "moderate martyr," stated George Packer (2006) in an article in *The New Yorker*.

Not everyone agreed with this description. A number of young Sudanese students who did not know Taha personally but admired his defiance saw him as part of the rejection of religious fanaticism and political despotism in their day, but not as a moderate martyr. Amir Ahmad Nasr, a liberal blogger who created a social media stir during the Arab Spring in 2011, wrote that "moderate" in this context was a relative term. He also found some of Taha's ideas awkward, yet praised his message as something that was full of humanity, which set him far apart from "the ruthless dictator and power-hungry Islamists who murdered him." The "judicial murder" of Taha was highly detrimental to al-Numeiri's own survival prospects, since the execution aggrieved a far greater number of parties than it pleased (Berridge, 2015). Nasr (2013) called Taha the "Gandhi of Sudan," if not in appearance then in temperament and conduct. Actually, the primary objective of liberal Islamic scholars (like Taha) was to portray religious texts (e.g., the Qur'an) as a humane historical document. By moving from text to context, they showed that the separation of religion and politics existed from the dawn of Islam. 'Ali 'Abd al-Raziq elaborated on this point as early as the mid-1920s, and

Khalid Muhammad Khalid followed suit in the late 1940s (Hatina, 2007). Yet few Islamic scholars accepted the premise that the Prophet was solely a spiritual leader, not a statesman or a military leader. Among those who did was Egyptian scholar Faraj Fuda, who wrote that the Prophet was above history since he was the "face of God." However, Syrian scholar Muhammad Shahrur saw the Prophet's life as the first historic model for the implementation of Islamic law, but certainly not the only one or the last word. And Egyptian jurist Muhammad Sa'id al-'Ashmawi adopted a more ambivalent approach when in some of his writings he acknowledged that the Prophet spread the message of Islam by establishing state institution and practices, but in other writings he pointed out that the Prophet was more of a messenger and an arbitrator, guiding people who came to him willingly rather than by force of law. Surely, Taha went a step further. He introduced a new element in the prevailing liberal Islamic discourse, namely, "Sufism."

Sudan was in many respects the outer edge of the Islamic world and Taha represented the geographical periphery of Arab liberal thought. Yet Taha's Sufi ideology, especially after his execution in 1985, spread beyond Sudan and trickled down as an evidence of a lively Arab liberalism, which crossed geographical and political borders. It is true that the Arab liberals and modernists were not enamored with the spiritual dimension of Islam from the late nineteenth century onward: due to its emphasis on inner experience, mortification of the body, and worship of holy men, the Sufi culture was viewed as a cult that cultivated passivism and ignorance, stunting the ability of the Muslims to develop in the modern world and ultimately degrading Islam. Taha himself expressed aversion toward the organizational aspect of Sufism as a fraternity (*tariqa*) typified by obeisance to the *shaikh* and rigid opposition to change. Yet Taha adopted some of its values, which he filtered from Sufi texts, such as social-altruism, solidarity, compassion of the self for the other/s (especially women and minorities), and humanism. These ethical values were prominent in his writings and his search for the true message of Islam, which he pursued with boldness. Taha looked for an optimal way of achieving a reciprocal and harmonious relationship between individuals and the community. His two basic principles were freedom and social equality, with the aim of combining democracy and socialism. Despite his use of Western terms, Taha made it clear that he was not an admirer of the West. On the contrary, he criticized Western civilization for its confused values, thereby pointing out that despite the great progress in science and technology, the West was plagued by a low level of human ethics, world wars, and materialism that turned man into a slave to the machine. According to Taha (1987: 54–55):

> This failure of the present industrialized Western civilization is therefore due to the fact that its material development was not supplemented by proper moral

> growth that clarifies the confusion and places the machine in its proper place as the servant of man and not his master. Material progress has unfortunately not been shored up by spiritual progress. In current social thinking, as stated above, bread is valued more than liberty. This is true today of socialism as well as capitalism. In fact, communism differs from capitalism only in degree. It is in essence as materialistic as capitalism, albeit more efficient in achieving fairer distribution. The apparent enmity between the two ideologies is similar to disagreement between various sects of the same religion, reflecting unity of their foundation rather than difference of origin.

Although Taha was accused of being a "fifth column" in the heart of the Muslim nation, he quite controversially suggested that the solution to the crisis of values was to be found in religion. His followers, defending his Sufi approach, claimed that the Turkish-style secularism was self-defeating. It was an illusion to think that constitutionalism and democratization could be sustained without addressing its Islamic foundation. If secular intellectuals abandoned the *sharī'a* law in favor of humanism and democracy, they were playing into the hands of their opponents, the Islamists. But invoking Islam as the highest authority for universal rights was not just a matter of belief. It also allowed Taha and his movement to "stay in the game" (Packer, 2006). Criticizing Western civilization was the first step, and a seemingly necessary one, especially if Taha was to present an alternative narrative for the era of the Prophet and Islam in general. The second step, which was also essential in light of Taha's conviction for heresy in 1960, was a declaration of loyalty to Islam, which enfolded within it the spirit of all the monotheistic religions, with the aim of returning man back to the lost paradise, and to the Prophet, God's revelation to whom was anchored in the Qur'an, "the last of the revealed Scriptures." Only then could Taha begin the work of deconstructing Islam and the Qur'an by means of his original and far-reaching commentary. Taha exclaimed:

> The age-old dream of the human caravan is not to send astronauts in their orbit in outer space. . . . It is to send its individuals, every single individual in his orbit of self-realization. It is high time that this dream be thus reinterpreted. It is also the sacred duty of every man and woman to help to intelligently re-orientate human endeavor towards the culmination of this pilgrimage.[3]

Accordingly, Taha's movement was renamed as the "New Islamic Mission" (Bowering et al., 2013). This movement presumed that the crisis of the modern man was a crisis of values. If man did not conduct himself in an ethical and wise way, he would lead himself and all mankind to destruction. The idea was to consolidate a religious ideology that crossed all boundaries of faith, gender, and race, liberating man from the distress of modern times and

paving the way for freedom, self-fulfillment, and happiness. In Taha's view, the authority of the "Qur'an" and "hadith" (i.e., the records of the words and deeds of the Prophet) was not open to question; it was only the correct understanding (*ma'ani*) that was debatable (Mahmoud, 2007). Based on this premise, Taha came up with a new ethical framework for Islam with its vision of the "good society." Taha (1987: 280–281) wrote:

> The good society is based on three equalities: economic equality, today known as socialism, or the sharing of wealth; political equality or democracy, or sharing in political decisions which affect daily life; and social equality which, to some extent, results from socialism and democracy, and is characterized by a lack of social classes and discrimination based on color, faith, race, or sex . . . people are judged according to their intellectual and moral character, as reflected in their public and private lives and demonstrated in the spirit of public service. . . . A good society also enjoys tolerant public opinion, permitting different life-styles and manners, as long as these are beneficial.

In his writings, he explored Islam on two levels: Islam that focused less on the binding strictures of religious law and more on educating people and bringing them to the gates of paradise voluntarily and without coercion and Islam as part of an evolutionary process. Taha wielded only a pen, yet posed such a threat to Sudanese Islamists that he was executed and buried in a secret location. What made this thinker so dangerous? Nasr asked. The answer to that question can be found in Taha's writings.

THE SECOND MESSAGE OF ISLAM: TAHA'S UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION

Taha held that Islam constituted a loftier stage of monotheistic development than the two religions that preceded it—Judaism and Christianity. Particularly, the Islam of Mecca, before the Prophet's migration to Medina, was the model of Islam he sought to renew. In his view, the Meccan period (612–622) represented the authentic formative spirit of Islam when it was an ethical creed advocating universal values such as justice, freedom, equality, and peace, and it was spread through persuasion and willing acceptance. In joining or not joining Islam, believers exercised the right of freedom that had been given to man, thereby validating the voluntary, humane character of Islamic message as embodied by the Qur'anic principle—"There is no compulsion in religion" (Sura 2: 256).[4] Indeed, the verses in the Meccan Qur'an addressed mankind in general, without discrimination based on race, gender, or social class. Slaves and other oppressed groups were welcome to join. Yet this humane, idealistic philosophy was rejected by the city's notables, who

feared it might negatively impact the socioeconomic order in Mecca. Over a period of thirteen years, the Prophet and his followers were scorned, ostracized, and persecuted: some members of the group were even tortured and executed when they refused to relinquish their humanist beliefs. Throughout this trying period, however, the Prophet responded with patience and restraint adhering to the Qur'anic sayings: "Repel evil with good" (Sura 23:96) and "call [people] to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good teaching; argue with them in the most courteous way" (Sura 16:125) (Taha, 1987: 146–164).

In Mecca, Islam was clearly pacifist in nature. It was only when life in that city became intolerable and the Prophet was forced to flee to Medina with his small band of followers that this progressive and enlightened approach was abandoned, Taha observed with sorrow. The migration to Medina, which marked the start of the Muslim calendar, ushered in a period of heightened influence under the leadership of the Prophet. But the move to the Medina period (622–632) wrought a great change in Islam: Islam became a religion of coercion, punishment, and threats, inundated with rules. *Al-nasikh wa'l-mansukh*—the abrogation of early Qur'anic verses in favor of later ones—was a widely used exegetical device by which Islamic jurists declared that the conciliatory verses of the Meccan period were superseded by the militant verses of the Medinan period. The guiding principle for abrogation was found in Sura 16:101: "When we substitute one revelation for another—and God knows best what He reveals—they say, 'You are just making it up', but most of them have no knowledge." In this way, an early verse sanctioning self-defense was replaced by an order to fight for the spread of Islam and conversion by the sword.[5] On a social level, the Qur'anic verses from Medina condoned slavery, and men were declared superior to women (Taha, 1987: 124–145). The Medinan verses were translated into governance by the formation of legislative, enforcement, and judicial systems.

However, Taha emphasized that the Prophet himself inserted important achievements by putting an end to the harsh conditions of Arab society of the time, such as ending the widespread practice of female infanticide, promoting charity as a religious duty, and improving the status of women compared to pre-Islamic times. Taha viewed "Surat An-Nisa" (the chapter on women in the Qur'an), containing many of the restrictions imposed on women in Islamic society, as part of the Medinan verses. The Meccan verses, on the other hand, grant women and men equality before God and under Islamic law.[6] Besides the stress on men-women equality, Taha, throughout his lifetime, continued to pray five times a day in keeping with the ritual established in Mecca, practicing a way of life that built character and mental balance. In fact, Taha expounded his "theory of prayer" in his major works *Risalat 'l-salat* (*A Treatise on Prayer*) (1966), *Tariq Muhammad* (*The Path of Muhammad*) (1966), and *Ta'mallamu kaifa tusallun* (*Teach Yourselves How*

to Pray) (1972). Taha presumed that prayer was the most noble of works, an act that was God-oriented par excellence and hence at the very root of the human relationship with the Divine. Taha's emphasis on prayer—which lies at the heart of his reformist project (Mahmoud, 2007)—served as a source of consolation, especially when the new Islamic regime (i.e., Medinan regime) failed to provide all the basic freedoms and equality before the law that were envisaged in the early Meccan era (Taha, 1969: 132–137).

Noticeably, Taha's sharp dividing of the Qur'an into Meccan verses and Medinan verses also meant dividing Islam into two distinct parts: earlier and later ones. The earlier one was exalted, principled, and relevant to modern life; the other was backward, intolerant, and anachronistic. However, Taha sought to soften his critical judgment of the Prophet's role in shaping the image of Islam in Medina. He argued that the city was in a state of anarchy when the Prophet arrived and needed a leader to unify the community and protect it from hostile figures. The laws incorporated in the Medina verses provided this guidance. First, permission was granted to fight one's oppressors (Sura 22:39). Second, self-defense was proclaimed a duty, but subject to rules and restrictions (Sura 2: 190). Last, as hostility between Mecca and Medina mounted, waging all-out war became a religious obligation. Evidently, the political and existential turmoil in Medina dictated a drift toward aggressive policies that sharply contrasted the Prophet's leadership style but he was identified with it as the leader of the community. Taha's efforts in softening his judgment upon the role of the Prophet in shaping the image of Medina Islam was largely doomed, given his sharp divide between the authentic Islam in Mecca and the false one in Medina. Divine revelation and the life of the Prophet have always been anchored in Muslim consciousness as an integral whole. Taha himself was aware of the controversial nature of his claim, which he described as "the most radical statement in the history of Islamic thought" (Taha, 1972). From a historical perspective, Taha was not the first to praise the Prophet's humanity and rationality and hold him up as a model of wisdom and virtue. This was also true of the early liberal scholars, especially in Egypt. Their agenda was very similar to that of Taha. They were anxious to stop the tide of young people streaming toward religious fundamentalism under the banner of the Muslim Brotherhood and to present Islam as a progressive creed as reflected in the figure of the Prophet. However, these writers differed from Taha in a very fundamental way: they treated the life of the Prophet as one piece, making no distinction between Meccan and Medinan phases or between ethical, universal Islam, and judicial and sectarian Islam, as Taha did.

Morally, according to Taha, the Medinan Islam was inferior to that of Mecca. It was an offshoot of Islam but without the roots. It created a community of believers whose lives were based on the *sharī'a* law that would be

developed and consolidated by the Islamic jurists in coming generations. The Medinan verses were acclaimed as the First Message of Islam, but Taha saw it as a distorted message that blocked out the Second Message—the authentic and humanistic message embodied in the Meccan verses. Yet, according to Taha, this Second Message was not dead or abolished; it had merely been historically deferred until mankind reached a level of development that could sustain its lofty vision. Taha believed that the world had arrived at this stage in the twentieth century. While people around the globe strove to build an enlightened society in the twentieth century, conservative religious Muslims had set up an impasse. However, this impasse (set up by conservative religious Muslims) did not imply that Islam was doomed. The First Message of Islam, he wrote, was a transitional and temporary phase. It was imperative to revive the Second Message, that is, the Meccan Islamic principles, as only they had the power to provide for the needs and demands of a modern man who was in pursuit of genuine freedom. The freedom of the individual (*al-huriyya al-fardiyya*) as a sanctified human right irrespective of religion or race was the essence of human civilization in Taha's eyes. This freedom in society means that a man thinks as he wills, says what he thinks, and does what he says with the provision that he should not infringe upon the freedom of others. If he does, he should bear the consequences of his actions, lest freedom degenerates into anarchy. Any infringement upon the freedom of others is dealt with by a constitutional law (The Republican Brothers, 1977; Voll, 2017).

Simply put, it was the duty of Islam to join the modern era, just as Judaism and Christianity had pledged to do. The accessibility of knowledge had turned the world into a global village. Modern man sought justice and clarity. He rejected religious obscurity and refused to blindly obey commandments that seemed meaningless. The challenge facing modern religion was rational thinking. People demand clear answers and scientific explanations. Embracing modernity would allow Islam to become an active intermediary in the human experience, setting limits if and when science and progress harm mankind. The goal was for man to take control of his life and be more than a cog in the wheel. This could only happen if the Islamic legislation was responsive to the authentic spirit of Islam, including the re-enactment of the legal principle of abrogation. In the seventh century, abrogation had negative implications on the Meccan humanist message. But in the twentieth century, it has a beneficial function. Taha saw it as a hermeneutical way out of the modern crisis of Islam, which would allow Muslims to affirm their faith without having to live by the inhumane code that Islamic law had become—a far cry from the universal, tolerant doctrines preached in Mecca. Taha dedicated his book, *The Second Message of Islam* (1967) to "humanity!" By calling for a return to the spiritual and benevolent Islam of Mecca, Taha sought to reinvent Islam as a universal religion for securing peace in IR.

ISLAM AS A BEACON OF PEACE IN IR: RESOLVING ARAB-ISRAEL CONFLICT

Taha's extraordinary attempts to remold the meanings of Qur'anic texts earned him the title of "Islam's perfect stranger." Taha proclaimed that Qur'anic texts contained the transcendental ethical elements which superseded the provisory legislative contents that shaped much of the *sharī'a* system. Potentially, the world was set to realize these transcendental ethical elements through a supremely ethical man. Deriving inspiration from the mystical Sufi tradition of Islam, Taha himself aspired to become a supremely ethical man who could inaugurate an age of goodness in the sociopolitical life of the world—Taha wanted to be a perfect, blessed stranger (Thomas, 2010: 2). However, Taha did not confine himself to the deconstruction of Qur'anic texts. He also sought to dismantle the Arab militant paradigm regarding the hostilities with Israel and to advocate an alternative discourse of conflict resolution in IR. As part of his cosmopolitan approach, he called upon the Arabs to recognize the right of the Jews to a Jewish state. Here, too, as in the religious sphere, Taha's endeavor to remake Arab conscious was bold and original. The trigger was the Arab defeat in 1967. Edward Thomas (2010: 132) reports:

> [Taha] chose the six-day war between Israel and her Arab neighbours as his topic for a lecture in Kosti. Taha had rejected Arab nationalism as racist; and believed that Gamal 'Abdel Nasser, its Egyptian leader, was a demagogue and the Soviet doorman in the Middle East. He wrote in 1968 that Islam did not hold favours for particular ethnic group—it was instead the purpose for everything. The Arab's enemy was not Israel, but themselves, and they should recognize the Jewish state. On the first day of the war he gave a lecture saying that the Arabs would lose to Israeli technology. Muslim Brothers waited outside, yelling "Mahmud [Taha] is a Zionist agent," but Taha ignored the police advice not to walk past them. The next day, Egyptian forces collapsed and the Republicans hired a taxi to go round Kosti announcing that Taha would speak on the Middle East crisis. He got a full house. . . . [Through his speech filled with] Sudanese idioms, [Taha] wanted comprehension, not admiration.

In fact, Taha was one of the architects of the culture of self-criticism (*thaqafat al-naqd al-dhati*) after the war and among the first Arab writers to preach peace with Israel. Shortly after the end of the 1967 war, he published a book titled *Mushkilat al-Sharq al-Awsat* (*The Problem of the Middle East*) which was overlooked in the scholarly literature. In this book, consisting of seven chapters, Taha (2009) analyzed the reasons behind the Arabs' severe defeat and outlined the solution to their problems, inter alia by recognizing Israel and signing peace agreements with it. For Taha, the 1967 defeat is

unprecedented in the long history of the Arabs. In its aftermath the enemies despise the Arabs and the friends pity them. Between contempt and pity the Arabs lost their honor. He blamed the Arab rulers for demonstrating political and intellectual immaturity in dealing with Israel, but above all for their deviation from the path of Islam, which carries a message of peace and brotherhood and has the sole power to relieve the distress of the Arabs in particular and the problems of humanity in general. While their ancestors in the seventh century entered the pages of history as Muslims and thus fertilized Persian civilization in the East and the Greco-Roman civilization in the West, Arabs in the twentieth century insisted on entering history as Arabs and sought victory over Israel without counting on God, and eventually were defeated. This is also the explanation for the previous defeats of 1948 and 1956, which were a warning sign of the approaching catastrophe; the Arab statesmen ignored them, however.

For Taha, the Arabs' salvation could come only after they learned the lessons, corrected their ways, and knew that they were first and foremost Muslims, heirs of the Qur'an, upholding the universal message that it was only through God (*Allah*) that the humanity could resolve its contemporary predicament. In Taha's view, the return to God (*Allah*) could enable the Arabs not only to cope better with the challenges of the modern era but also to restructure their mission to bring the message of Islam—peace—to the world that needs to ensure that man lives as a human being and not as an animal in the shadow of wars and bloodshed.[7] Instead of viewing the Arab defeat in 1967 as a tragedy and the state of Israel as a curse, Taha perceived them as a gift from heaven, a grace God made with the Arabs to correct their ways and to move away from ethnic identity, which he renounced as racism (*'unsuriya*). Because of this defeat, Taha hoped that the Arabs would find themselves forced to sit and think about their many mistakes. They would fully repent so that God (*Allah*) would be satisfied with them. If the Arabs had a choice, they would choose to defeat the state of Israel and throw it into the sea. But Taha preferred this 1967 defeat because the victory could prolong the Arabs' deviation, distance them from their true mission, and destroy them from the real enemy. In Taha's eyes, the state of Israel was not the enemy of the Arabs, but the Arabs were their own worst enemies because they had left God (*Allah*), sought glory and victory elsewhere, and were content to rest in the pits of ignorance and distraction. Taha (2009: 7–8) argued: "Who knows, perhaps the state of Israel is a friend in an enemy garb? Perhaps it is the whip that awakens the Arabs from heavy, long years of drowsiness?" For Taha, Israel was to be seen as a friend in an enemy garb, a tool in the hands of God to reform the Arab world, a correction that could begin first and foremost as the respect for humankind, and then as the expansion of human liberties, and the empowerment of individualism by establishing a democratic system. In

fact, Israel functioned as a mirror for the Arabs, highlighting their faults, and therefore it was necessary to reach out for a peace with it. Peace was necessary both by virtue of the geopolitical and international reality that worked in Israel's favor and due to the humanism inherent in Islam. On the other hand, war was an impractical option, and those who supported it committed a sin and deceived their people. Neither side to the conflict could force their own agenda on the other; the only real output was to sit around the negotiating table (Taha, 2009: 169–182).

Taha's call for recognition to Israel seems to enclose a humanistic-liberal approach: people need to talk to each other in order to resolve conflicts. But there is also a hint of Political Realism here: it is impossible to force the "other" party to a conflict to make concessions, certainly if it is stronger than the "self." Taha stipulated that a political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict would lay the foundation for the next phase of the Arabs' redemption and exit from their current crisis and would enable them to enter the new era, namely modernity that nurtures science and technology and encourages the individual to develop and flourish. Taha cautiously crafted a comprehensive vision for Arab societies that intertwined peace and reconciliation with Israel, respect for individualism and a better interaction with modernity, thus narrowing the gaps between the East and the West. According to Taha (1978: 31–32), this was the Second Message of Islam that needed to be revived and placed at the forefront of the Arab thought and conduct. In fact, Taha dedicated this Second Message of Islam to the entire humanity (not just to the Arab world), thereby transporting its transcendental ethical elements to all the domains of IR. Although Taha was popularly accepted as the "Third World teacher" (Howard, 1988) and the "giant of the post-colonial era" (West, 2009), the brutal act of his hanging by the Sudanese regime of Ja'afar al-Numeiri was severely condemned as a sheer violation of human rights inconsistent with the shared values of the whole international community (Miller, 1985). Undeniably, Taha's call for the method of trial and error in the process of self-transformation and his perception of the *sharī'a* as an evolved product of human understanding of revelation (Taha, 1987: 152–153) is applicable at all levels in today's intensive and expansive age of globalization: local, national, and global (Kirchschläger, 2018).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In daring to discard a part of the Prophet's mission—his time in Medina—Taha surpassed the other liberal modernists of his time and advocated a radical form of Islamic renewal. To ignore the Islam of Medina, from which Muslim civilization developed over centuries, meant disassociation from

1,400 years of judicial and religious traditions. It signified a total transformation of Islam and according to some, the invention of a utopian Islam. Taha's execution in January 1985, under pressure from the Muslim Brotherhood and the establishment of legal experts (*ulamas*), clearly attested to such fears. Nonetheless, the legacy that Taha left behind was a synthesis of Sufism, democracy, and socialism, which, in his view, represented the ideal amalgamation of ethics, freedom, and equality, and of cosmopolitan vision of brotherhood among people and nations. Taha's affinity for Sufism should not obscure his dual contribution to liberal Arab discourse. One was the individualization of religious faith and consolidation of Islam as an ethical system, and the other was a cosmopolitan vision of brotherhood among men and openness to the modern world without ignoring its flaws. Taha belonged to a group of Arab liberals that included Khalid Muhammad Khalid, Nasr Abu Zayd, Khalid 'Abd al-Karim, Muhammad Sa'id al-'Ashmawi, Sayyid al-Qimni, and Muhammad Shahrur, all of whom produced innovative Islamic scholarship that attracted considerable attention. Yet, in contrast to other Arab liberals, Taha's controversial religious commentary went much further as he reframed a part of the Prophet's mission in Medina as nothing more than a "cultural revolution" (*thawra thaqafiyya*). Taha's execution triggered an outcry and was seen as a grave threat to freedom of thought and expression. Yet his teaching did not win much support in liberal circles or spark serious discussion. Criticism of the Prophet's life, especially his period in Medina, remained a taboo, with the focus shifting more toward the conduct of those who came after him. While Taha's Sufi approach failed to gain approval in liberal discourse, the principle of deconstructing Islam and challenging the validity of certain commandments did seep into liberal ideology. Rather than rejecting the unity of the Qur'an, however, other spokesmen of the liberal cause explored the validity of Qur'anic verses in the modern era by analyzing their morality and historic rationale.[8] Indeed, Taha's research methodology—which involves the replacement of particular historical-contextual certainty with general philosophical-textual virtues (Mattes, 2010)—stands to enrich the contemporary Sufi study of Global IR.

NOTES

1. For a comprehensive coverage of Taha's biography, see Thomas (2010).

2. An extract of Taha's leaflet titled "Either This or the Flood" is available at https://www.alfikra.org/article_page_view_e.php?article_id=1001&page_id=1 [Accessed October 11, 2019]. Also, see Taha (1987).

3. The official website that mentions Taha's ideological thought is available at https://www.alfikra.org [Accessed October 16, 2019].

4. This article mostly cites the translations of Qur'anic verses by Abdel Haleem (2005). The cited verses follow the numbering of the common Egyptian edition.

5. The replacement of "self-defense" with an "order to fight for the spread of Islam" contributed to the multiple meanings of the term "jihad": as per the Persian Gnostic, Sayyid Haydar Amuli (fourteenth century) (1989), jihad implies the struggle against the self and against the doubts and misgivings of the speculative intellect. As such, jihad can be "of the heart," or "of the pen," but only under certain conditions, in self-defense or defense of the oppressed who cannot protect themselves, "of the sword" (Olesen, 1995; Shah, 2013). For a fuller discussion on this issue, see chapter 10.

6. In 1976, Taha wrote: "The Second Message of Islam [based upon the Meccan verses] lifts women to an equal status with men in all fields. But the field in which the effect of this advancement of women is paramount is the field of marriage laws. Here the Second Message of Islam redefines marriage, on the legal plane, as a contract between two equal partners, entered upon by their own free will, with equal rights for both partners for equivalent duties, and dissolved, should the need arise, by agreement between them. Spelled out, this means that there is no longer any guardian who signs the marriage contract on behalf of the bride. Instead, the bride signs for herself. Also the right of divorce will be equally shared by the couple" (Al-Nagar and Tønnessen, 2015: 1–2).

7. Explaining how "jihad" was not an original precept in Islam, Taha (1987: 274–275) narrated: "Some Muslim scholars believe that Islamic wars were purely defensive wars, a mistaken belief prompted by their keenness to refute claims by the Orientalists that Islam spread by means of the sword. In fact, [the notion of "jihad" as "use of the sword]" was [later inserted] to curtail the abuse of freedom . . . . [However], in justifying the use of the sword, we may describe it as a surgeon's lancet and not a butcher's knife. When used with sufficient wisdom, mercy, and knowledge, it uplifted the individual and purified society."

8. A prominent exception was the Egyptian writer Sayyid al-Qimni, who can be viewed as Taha's direct successor. Following incisive look at the Prophet's life and the lives of his followers, al-Qimni (1990; 1993) noted the harsh treatment of idol-worshippers and Jews. Unsurprisingly, he wrote, the establishment of the first Islamic state in Medina was accompanied by power struggles and oppression, which became the hallmark of the caliphs. The Islamic conquests were "colonialist" in nature: they trampled the authentic heritage of the nations of the East, including Egypt, and branded it heresy. Al-Qimni's aim was to incorporate the ancient history of the Nile Valley and the Mediterranean, that is, Pharaonic, Greek, and Roman histories, which constituted the nucleus of European civilization. In this way, he hoped to delegitimize the ideological basis of the adversaries of Arab liberalism and their call for a return to religious identity (Islamists) or ethnic identity (Arab nationalists): both viewed by al-Qimni as a formula for oppression and cultural isolation.

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Part 3

ANALYSING MANIFESTATIONS OF SUFISM: ENCOUNTERS WITH THE WESTERN WORLDS

Chapter 9

The American Discourse on Sufism: On the Resilience of 'Mystical Islam'

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The lovers of God have no religion but God alone. (Morrow, 2012)

American exchanges with Sufism are rooted in a long tradition of reception and re-elaboration of 'mystical Islam'. Early encounters between America and Islam date back to the seventeenth century, when Africans were transported to the colonies and coerced into slavery, or when the Bostonian Joshua Gee, after seven years of slavery in Algiers, wrote the first Barbary captivity narrative, to which many others would follow. Muslims have been migrating to and settling in the United States since the 1880s, and now Islam has become America's third-largest religion, after Christianity and Judaism (Esposito, 2019). A remarkable moment in the history of American Islam occurred when for the first time two Muslim women, Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar, were elected to Congress through the mid-term elections of 2018. Today, diverse forms of Sufism thrive in America (Dickson, 2015). And the American literary market has witnessed an astonishing success of the poetry of Jalaluddin Muhammad Rūmī, the thirteenth-century Sufi mystic from Persia, due to a series of non-academic translations that emerged since the 1980s and made Sufi poetics accessible to Western, non-Muslim readerships – a trend termed as the 'Rūmī Phenomenon' (El-Zein, 2000). Rūmī's popularity further increased after the 9/11 attacks, when advocates of Islam chose Sufism as a counter-narrative against the equation of Islam with extremist violence. As an integral part of the American literary history since romanticism, Sufism has contributed to the US core cultural values such as experiential spirituality, pluralism, and the idea of civil religion among others. In the light of these realities, this chapter aims to show that Islam is not only compatible with the set of visions that have shaped American democracy (such as freedom, individualism, and multiculturalism) but also a

constituent part of the American conceptual universe, and closer to its generative moments than it is generally believed. In order to prove this point, this chapter illustrates how a vibrant American discourse on Sufism has existed since the nineteenth century, and how this discourse has played a fundamental role in the production of an American imaginary. It is worth noting that, in recent times, the American public sphere has recruited Sufism to promote a cultural dialogue that could interweave Islamic and American vocabularies, thereby building rhetoric of successful cultural interdependence.[1] While the mainstream religions in America are facing challenges as a result of modernity and secularism (Hazen, 2016), Sufism serves as not only a fertile ground for Muslim-American entanglements but also a counterpoint to the myth of civilizational clash (or cultural incompatibility). This chapter proposes that a deeper recognition of cultural commonalities between Sufism ('mystical Islam') and the United States would go a long way in rebutting the thesis of civilizational clash that has informed much of the public discourse in post-9/11 period and has climaxed in Donald Trump's presidential oratory.

SUFISM AND THE AMERICAN ENLIGHTENMENT

Even if the American authors and public figures did not openly connect with Sufism sooner than the nineteenth century, the American Enlightenment opened creative spaces that would later facilitate the reception of Sufism in the United States, offering precedents for some of its figurations. In fact, the First Great Awakening in the 1730s and 1740s was a sizeable religious movement that aspired to do away with the doctrinal orthodoxies of Puritanism in favour of more intimate and tolerant forms of communing with the divine (Kidd, 2009). There are several potential overlaps between the spiritual possibilities enabled by the Great Awakening and the reception of Sufism in the United States. According to Marcia Hermansen (2004: 38), movements such as the Great Awakening overruled the Protestant preoccupation with 'mastery and control' as well as the Enlightenment's attempts to establish 'cerebral and scientifically sound' religious doctrines such as deism; what supplanted them was a mystical strand of letting go, feeling, and experiencing. Perhaps, the popularity of Sufism in the twentieth century came as a consequence of the attraction of Americans towards experiential modes of spirituality and indicated a new readiness to cross boundaries.

When Jonathan Edwards (1821: xxvi), one of the most renowned spiritual leaders of the Great Awakening, claims 'to sing or chant forth [his] meditations, to speak [his] thoughts in soliloquies, and speak with a singing voice', he reminds us of the Sufi practice of *dhikr* (literally, 'the remembrance

of God'). Within Islam, *dhikr* is a form of meditation wherein believers repeat the name of God and his attributes. Words, Qur'anic passages, or short phrases are recited in rhythmic patterns, sometimes with the help of percussion instruments or vocal improvisations (Ernst, 2004a). Particular Sufi orders, such as the Riffa'i, are known for their loud recitations or the Mevlevi for their dance (*samā*). The drums, the swaying of the body, and the chanting can lead to states of trance or ecstasy. According to Frank Kelleter (2009: 171), Edwards's contemplative practices are conducive to a form of 'sublime self-loss' that anticipates a romantic sensibility and is reminiscent of the Sufi dedication to '*fanā'*', that is, annihilation of the egoistic self (or temporal I-ness) in the face of God. Although Islamic mysticism played little to no role in the making of Edwards's Awakening theology, it is safe to say that, when Sufism did make its appearance on the continent, his writings offered templates that may have made Sufi practices seem compatible with American spirituality.

Kelleter understands the First Great Awakening as permeated by two postures that also constituted key heresies in the Protestant faith: (1) 'enthusiasm' (or divine possessions); and (2) 'antinomianism' (or the subversion of pre-established laws and doctrines). Both are profoundly inherent to the Sufi experience as well. One can trace a point of contact between the enthused individuals of the Great Awakening[2] and those who came to be known as the 'intoxicated Sufis' (Campo, 2009). For example, Bayazid-e-Bastami (d. *c*. 875.) and Mansur Al-Hallaj (d. 922) are remembered for making ecstatic articulations about their experience of union with God: Bastami uttered 'Glory be to me' and was accused of blasphemy for claiming identity with God; and Al-Hallaj proclaimed 'I am the Truth', and his statement was recorded as 'the most extreme expression of mystical union with God in the history of Islamic mysticism' (Mason, 2004: 290). Both Bastami and Al-Hallaj showed a spirit of antinomianism: in history, Bastami and Al-Hallaj's acute defiance of orthodox doctrines faced strong resentments from conventional religious authorities. While Bastami avoided capital punishment by feigning madness, Al-Hallaj was tortured and put to death.[3] Strikingly, when a century later Ralph Waldo Emerson (1971: 189) will write 'ineffable is the union of man and God in every act of the soul; the simplest person who in his integrity worships God, becomes God', he will be mobilizing both the Great Awakening and the Sufi tradition.

Indeed, the antinomianism that characterized the Great Awakening left lingering marks on American spirituality. Harold Bloom (1992: 45) argues that 'creeds do not suit the American spirit', and Hermansen (2004: 39) echoes Bloom when she states that 'rootlessness and rebelliousness typify religion and culture'. These lingering marks may have prepared the ground

for the tremendous success of Sufism, as a few early Sufi practitioners have been cast as rebels striving towards intellectual emancipation at the cost of their life. One sees this clearly in the writings of Emerson (2010: 132), wherein he admiringly writes that, to Sufi poet Hafiz, 'a law or statute [was] what a fence is to a nimble schoolboy, a temptation for a jump'. Even the antinomianism of the intoxicated Sufis is remediated in Emerson's famous essay 'The Method of Nature' (1845: 91) through the figure of Empedocles – 'statements of the infinite are usually felt to be unjust to the finite, and blasphemous. . . . Empedocles undoubtedly spoke a truth of thought, when he said, I am God'. As a major ideologue of Transcendentalism, it is exactly this 'easy audacity' that appeals to Emerson. In his 'Remarks at Organization of Free Religious Association' (1869), Emerson declares that 'nor hymn nor prayer nor church' is equipped with adequate tools to articulate the divine, and 'that the churches are outgrown; that the creeds are outgrown; that a technical theology no longer suits us'. There are a series of texts written by Emerson that reflect a 'general spirit of unrest and hostility to convention' (Gray, 7).

During the nineteenth century, Sufi voices did grow to considerable popularity among leading American authors. Besides Emerson, other Transcendentalists and Transcendentalism-inspired writers such as Walt Whitman (1819–1892), Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), and Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) laid the foundations for distinct narratives of American-ness: they believed in the spiritual interdependence of nature and the individual, in the necessity of dissent, in the presence of a benevolent governing principle, and in the infinite potential of humanity. There is significant evidence that their readings of Sufi literature contributed to the shaping of their conceptual universe and, hence, of the narratives that lie at the basis of American sensitivity. Of course, not as many have engaged with the influence of Sufism on Walt Whitman's work as did on Emerson's, the reason supposedly being the scarcity of direct references to Sufism in Whitman's poems. However, Sufi connotations are harvested in Whitman's poem 'A Persian Lesson' (while 'Salut au Monde' and 'Passage to India' are usually mentioned for their Eastern imagery). Also, Whitman's best-known poetry collection 'Leaves of Grass' is thoroughly traversed with Sufi affinities, most notably the 'Song of Myself' and 'Sea Drift Cluster'. Themes like the loss of the beloved, metaphors of drowning, and the identity between speaker and God evoke tenets of Sufism, even when Whitman's conceptual outlook seems almost antipodal to that of the Sufi. At first reading, Whitman's insistence on the magnificence of the self seems hardly compatible with the Sufi call for dissolution of the egoistic self in God (*fanā'*). It is even claimed that Whitman used the Sufi 'unorthodoxly' and 'to his own ends' (Ford, 1987: 18). However, most of these contradictions can be solved and the coherence between Whitman and

the Sufi maintained. In actuality, many critics go beyond locating generic Sufi interests in Whitman to associate his poetics with that of Rūmī's. A passage of 'Song of Myself' offers compelling proof that Whitman knew Rūmī and let Rūmī's verses inspire his own.

> The Prophet said that God has declared,
> 'I am not contained in aught above or below,
> I am not contained in earth or sky, or even
> In highest heaven.
> Know this for a surety. O beloved!
> Yet am I contained in the believer's heart!' (Rūmī, 1898: 35)

> Am not contain'd between my hat and boots,
> I am not an earth nor an adjunct of an earth,
> I am the mate and companion of people, all just as immortal and fathomless as myself. (Whitman, 2002: 31)

The two passages show conspicuous similarities. Both Rūmī's God and Whitman's speaker announce that they exceed every tangible ('above or below'/'hat and boots') and intangible measure ('earth or sky, or . . . highest heaven'/'an earth or an adjunct of an earth'), but remain within the individual's reach ('I am contained in the believer's heart'/'I am the mate and companion of people'). This allows us to return to the Transcendentalist scepticism towards traditional doctrines, and its advocacy of more intimate, less restrictive forms of worship and knowledge that it inherited from the First Great Awakening. Moreover, the Sufis' insistence on the heart as God's dwelling place bears strong resemblance to the Transcendentalists' humanist theology.[4] In one of his most intense Sufi passages, Emerson (1969: 415) asks: 'Are there not moments in the history of heaven when the human race was not counted by individuals, but was only the Influenced, was God in distribution, God rushing into multiform benefit?' As Emerson (1845: 100) agrees with the Sufi in placing God inside the human body, which becomes a vessel filled with divine overflowings, Whitman's speaker (2017: 24) sees himself as identical with and a continuation of God and knows that 'the hand of God is the promise of my own, and the spirit of God is the brother of my own'. To be sure, experiences such as the Awakenings and Transcendentalism have made American religiosity receptive to Sufi principles. Sufism might have responded – and might still respond – to an American need for intimate experiences of the divine and rejection of orthodoxy: 'the mindset of the Sufi', C. W. Ernst (2004b: 481) explains, 'is quite different – more tolerant, and less legalistic'. Because the Transcendentalists' contribution to the

development of 'American self' is immense, their attachment to Sufi authors locates Sufism at the very core of American culture.

SUFISM AND THE RŪMĪ PHENOMENON

In its diffusion at the level of both academic and popular culture, the late twentieth-century fascination with Sufism has no precedents in American history. Ever since the 1980s, the American literary market has been taken by storm by what may be called the Rūmī phenomenon: Rūmī has become the best-selling poet in the United States, a primate that generated a series of epigones fictionalizing the poet's biography and expanding on the impact of his Sufi poetry on American culture (Furlanetto, 2013). Observing how this extraordinary interest in Rūmī occurs at the same time as the American media expresses a rhetorical misconception of everything Muslim, A. El-Zein (2000: 73–77) comments:

> There are two kinds of translations, academic and non-academic. . . . Academic translations of Rumi started with Hammer who published a selection of his poetry in 1838. In 1849, the German diplomat, Georg Rosen translated a part of *Mathnawī*. Then two British scholars Sir James Redhouse (1881) and H. Whinfield (1887) translated the other parts of *Mathnawī*. They were followed by Nicholson who in 1898 translated some poems of the *Dīwān*. . . . In 1961, Arberry translated *Fīhi mā-fīhi* (In it is what is in it) under the title *The Discourses*. . . . In 1978, Annemarie Schimmel published her book *Triumphant Sun*. . . . In 1983, William Chittick published *The Sufi Path of Love: Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*. . . . [Then came] what I call the 'New Sufism' approach. . . . The reason for using this term is that . . . almost none of these [non-academic translations] that explore the New Age Phenomenon mentions Islam. . . . In 1981, Coleman Barks [published] *Night and Sleep* . . . . [Since then], Barks rendered more than fourteen books of Rumi. . . . [He] tours the country reading Rumi's verse at workshops with a jazz ensemble, in bookstores. . . . Rumi's enormous success in America is due to the fact that Americans find in his work a whole program of spirituality that may be summarized in four points: love; the Sufi universe; illusion versus reality; silence and emptying the self.

El-Zein finds fault with not only the consumption of non-academic translations of Rūmī as a 'spiritual product' but also the detachment of Sufism from its Islamic contexts:[5] the non-academic translations of Rūmī published in the 1980s–1990s have expunged Qu'ranic references that may appear cryptic to a Western reader, thereby uprooting Rūmī's verses from their specific Islamic tradition and suspending them in a 'spiritual elusiveness'. Portraying this

disengagement of Sufism with Islamic contexts as an objectionable trait of contemporary American Sufi literature, Ali (2017) laments:

> Rumi himself described the 'Masnavi' as 'the roots of the roots of the roots of religion' – meaning Islam – 'and the explainer of the Koran'. And yet little trace of the religion exists in the translations that sell so well in the United States. The Rumi that people love is very beautiful in English, and the price you pay is to cut the culture and religion. . . . I see a type of 'spiritual colonialism' at work here: bypassing, erasing, and occupying a spiritual landscape that has been lived and breathed and internalized by Muslims from Bosnia and Istanbul to Konya and Iran to Central and South Asia.[6] Extracting the spiritual from the religious context has deep reverberations. Islam is regularly diagnosed as a 'cancer', including by General Michael Flynn, president-elect Donald Trump's pick for national-security adviser, and, even today, policymakers suggest that non-Western and non-white groups have not contributed to civilization.

Notwithstanding these compelling criticisms, Robert Frager, another representative of the Rūmī phenomenon, embarks upon a psychological re-reading of the Sufi approach to self-identity: Frager's re-reading is not only 'academic' but also embedded in 'non-Western Islamic tradition'.[7] Distinguishing between the Western and Sufi notions of self-identity, Frager's book – *Heart, Self and Soul: The Sufi Psychology of Growth, Balance and Harmony* (1999: 7) – states:

> Western psychologists hold that self-esteem and a strong sense of ego identity are important; that loss of identity is pathological. [However], in Sufism, the sense of a separated identity is one of the veils between us and God that distorts reality and prevents us from knowing our true nature. Our goal is to transform our egos and to lose our sense of separate identity. When we finally realize our nothingness, we can perfect our unity with the infinite.

To grasp the day-to-day functioning of this Sufi approach to self-identity, a woman character in Frager's book asks Shaikh Muzaffer (1999: xv): 'Can an American become one of your dervishes?', and Shaikh Muzaffer answers 'Yes, an American can become one of my dervishes'; 'Yes, it is possible to live here in America and be my dervish'; and 'My daughter, you are my spiritual child already'! This open interfaith interface enables the possibility of undertaking a Sufi trajectory in the United States, far away from traditional Islamic spaces, thereby signifying that space can be transcended, and that the Sufi path is universally accessible. The narrator in Frager's book candidly admits that, as his initiation to Sufism came near, he was tormented by strange thoughts such as 'would I have to become a Muslim? Would I have to renounce my love for other religions? Would I have to give up wine?'

Although these questions are never answered in Frager's book, the implied answer is a negative one: one must not convert to Islam to become a Sufi, and one must not relinquish previous religious affiliations. In line with the Iranian philosopher Seyyed Hossain Nasr – who argues that the roots of Sufi mysticism reach deep into Islam, and yet one can take the spiritual teachings of a religion outside of a religion and practise them (Wajahat, 2008) – Frager (1999: 13) declares that Sufism 'is a spiritual discipline for all peoples and cultures'. In so doing, Frager makes the Sufi approach to self-identity accessible to both Western and non-Western public that may instinctively feel reluctant to embrace an Islamic doctrine, especially in the first decades of the twenty-first century that have been drenched in Islamophobia and disentitled to meddling with its complexities.

While the Great Awakening and Sufism are tied through the common threads of 'enthusiasm' and 'antinomianism', the present American literature and Sufism mainly blend together along two points: (1) 'annihilation of the egoistic self'; and (2) 'ineffability of divine truths'. Sufism necessitates the annihilation of one's mundane ego, in preparation of the following stage, that of the subsistence in God. For instance, a radical verse from Rūmī pronounces: 'Everything is perishing but His face; unless thou art in His face, do not seek to exist'. Likewise, Chittick (2005: 71) explains: 'Man's self-existence is not real, since he is not God; therefore the illusion that it is real must be annihilated'.[8] Even Emerson (1971: 161) retells: 'What we commonly call man, the eating, drinking, planting, counting man, does not, as we know him, represent himself, but misrepresents himself. . . . The blindness of the intellect begins when it would be something of itself. The weakness of the will begins when the individual would be something of himself'. Here, Emerson reproduces the Sufi principle of annihilation: the self entrapped in mundane practices (eating, drinking, planting, counting) is but a misrepresentation of the humanity's potential to be a divine temple. By contemplating upon heart and soul, and reiterating the importance of destroying the 'tyrannical self' (*nafs*), Frager unravels the common pillars of American romanticism and Sufism, allowing the continuity of the American discourse on Sufism to surface.

But then, despite the Sufi stress on annihilation, Frager knows that he operates in a country which has always placed the individual potential at the core of cultural imagination and is reticent to reproduce images of complete self-abolition. Frager (1999: 3–8), therefore, gives the self a possibility for redemption: 'In Sufi psychology, the self, or *nafs*, is an aspect of the psyche that begins as our worst adversary but can develop into an invaluable tool. . . . Sufi psychology distinguishes between the healthy, positive ego and the self-centered, negative ego. . . . [The negative ego is] like a donkey that we carry on our backs instead of being carried by the donkey'. How not to be reminded

of Attar (1984: 63) who affirms: 'And I am not my self's ass, he is mine . . . the beast I ride on rides on you', and Henry David Thoreau (1854) who cautions against materialism and excessive industrialization in Walden: 'We do not ride the railroad; it rides upon us'. Remarkably, in Frager's American Sufism, the annihilation process is ultimately converted into a therapeutic labour of perfection: the emotional well-being and healthy, nourishing relationships are as essential as spiritual and physical health; the goal is not a loss of self but a 'transformation' of the ego so as to lose the sense of 'separate identity'.

Another area that displays continuity between the Transcendentalist dispositions of American romanticism and Sufism is the ineffability of divine truths. In this context, Frager (1999: 9) resorts to Sufi poet Hafiz: 'If you think that the Truth can be known from words. . . . O someone should start laughing!' Hafiz's words resonate with Emerson's 'The Over-Soul' (2010: 391): 'We know truth when we see it from opinion . . . as we know when we are awake that we are awake', and Emily Dickinson's poem no. 420 (2016: 16): 'You'll know it – as you know 'tis Noon–By Glory–As you do the Sun–By Glory'.[9] As Hafiz, Emerson, and Dickinson acknowledge the limited capacity of words to disclose truths, Frager asserts that the highest states of spiritual development are beyond word-dependent rational description. Like many other representatives of the Rūmī phenomenon, Frager's book contains a variety of topics that indicate the domestication of Sufism for American readerships: from hard work ('a dervish is a harder and more honest worker than anyone else', 1999: 12) to optimism, self-reliance, even the legitimacy of material gain, and the careful rephrasing of the idea of poverty into a middle-class-friendly rhetoric ('poverty means . . . a heart that is empty of all desires except the desire for God', 1999: 7). It is interesting to examine if this domestication of Sufism is likely to have an impact on the US role in global politics.

AMERICAN SUFISM AND GLOBAL POLITICS

Sufism has survived as a dynamic literary-cultural tradition in America (Hazen, 2016). However, Sufism's journey in global politics saw a new turning point after the 9/11 attacks that prompted the US-led war on terror. As the US-led war on terror progressed in Afghanistan and Iraq (with warnings issued against Iran and North Korea), it eventually led to the liquidation of al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden and Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. Nonetheless, both incidents raised just as many questions about America's alliances as they answered: even after the voting out of Bush administration (that had

disseminated the controversial anti-Muslim 'axis-of-evil' propaganda)[10] in favour of America's first black president, Barack Obama, the anti-American sentiment continued to flourish all around the world (Glant, 2012). In order to overcome this anti-American sentiment, the strategic need to dilute America's anti-Muslim image was widely felt. And in order to fulfil this strategic need, Sufism was brought to the fore in US policy-making circles. Philippon (2018) clarifies:

> Sufism has come to be seen as a gentle, 'moderate' alternative and a tool of counterterrorism policies in many Muslim-majority countries – and beyond. Indeed, it has also been brought to the fore in U.S. policymaking circles as an ideological bulwark against extremism. As a popular instrument of 'religious soft power' and a 'positive branding of Islam', Sufism has been used by state and non-state actors 'to influence what others do through attraction and persuasion' rather than coercion. These intricate top-down and bottom-up processes are interwoven in diplomatic and transnational practices and have implications at various levels – from the local to the global.

Thus, when UNESCO declared 2007 as International Year of Rūmī and celebrated his 800th anniversary on 6 September of that year, White House photographers posed president George W. Bush's wife, Laura, with a book of Rūmī's Sufi poetry on her lap (Howell, 2019). However, the present president Donald Trump has once again complicated the perception of American and anti-American sentiment by exacerbating Islamophobic attitudes that became endemic after the 9/11 attacks (Elliott, 2017): Trump not only made ample use of anti-Islamic rhetoric during his electoral campaign but also imposed the infamous 'Muslim Ban', preventing citizens of seven Muslim countries to enter the United States. Not surprisingly, during Trump's regime, the narratives of incompatibility between Islam and the United States have gained momentum. While the 'American Mulsim Poll 2019' has found that Muslims are least likely to approve of the way president Donald Trump is handling his job (only 16 percent), recent surveys by the New America Foundation and American Muslim Institution have shown that a large number of non-Muslim Americans (42 percent, according to the acquired data) believe that Islam is incompatible with American values (Mandhai, 2018). Apparently, the interference of religion in affairs of the state via *sharī'a* law, limited understandings of the idea of 'submission' implicit in the very word 'Islam', and flawed interpretation of *jihad* as perpetual war against non-Muslims have generated misperceptions about a fundamental discordance between Islam and those unalienable rights that have informed American democracy since independence. Nonetheless, the American public sphere has made visible efforts to debunk such misperceptions and revisit the

connections between Islam and American society. Smith and Haddad (2015: Abstract) report:

> The rise of religious and educational institutions, leadership and youth movements, along with the expansion of Islam through outreach in prisons and through volunteerism, have served to give cohesion and a growing sense of what it means to be part of American Islam. . . . The process of integration and assimilation that has been intensified as a response to 9/11 has brought about a creative response in which Muslims are eager to be Muslim and American at the same time. . . . [A few] elements of Muslim culture . . . are part of the current creative response to the reality of American Islam, including Islamic dress and fashion, art and architecture, film and filmmaking, health and medicine, politics, and Muslim-Christian relations.

With the global rise of Islamic authenticity and piety movements in recent decades (Hermansen, 2015), Sufism has been pushed as an 'Islamic language of toleration' (Masroori, 2010). Sufism as an Islamic language of toleration is in sync with the American vision of 'civil religion'. Robert N. Bellah (1921) introduced the vision of civil religion composed of certain common elements of diverse faith orientations that the great majority of Americans shared as 'quasi-sacred'. These common elements have played a crucial role in the development of American institutions and still provide a religious dimension for the whole fabric of American life, including the political sphere. Being a multifaith country ever since its inception, the United States has developed strategies to construct a model of unity out of multiplicity, of sameness in spite of difference. For this reason, cultural concepts such as the 'melting pot' – that evoked a forced process of homogenization by melting in the flames[11] (Zangwill, 1909) – have been deliberately replaced with narratives that are mindful of difference. Since Bellah's vision of civil religion is a 'universal and transcendent religious reality' (1921: 7), it facilitates the ingress of Sufism into the United States' current cultural landscape. It is in this context that the questions asked in Frager's book – such as 'Would I have to become a Muslim?' and 'Would I have to renounce my love for other religions?' – assume great relevance. For one, Bellah notes that 'although much is selectively derived from Christianity, the [civil] religion is clearly not itself Christianity' (1921: 4); he substantiates his point by mentioning how the American presidents normally do not mention Jesus Christ in their inaugural addresses, but not one of them fails to mention God. Like Bellah's vision of civil religion is derived from Christianity but is not identical to it, many Sufi orders in the United States uphold the logic that Sufism stems from Islam but can cultivate universal values, the adherence to which is not dependent on conversion to Islam. In effect, the transnational character of these Sufi orders

reinforces the key tenets of American cultural pluralism and American civil religion (Dickson, 2014).

Perhaps, the possibility offered by certain Sufi orders to become a Sufi adept without converting to Islam has been associated with an adjustment to non-Islamic environments, and, more specifically, with a redefinition of Sufi Muslim identity within a religiously pluralist environment, attracting an audience that values religious openness more than dogmatic fixation. Presently, numerous Sufi orders, such as Mevlevi, Nimatullahi, Khalwati-Jarrahi, Naqshibandi, Shadhali, and Qadiri, are found in the United States.[12] In addition to numerous Sufi orders throughout the country, there is also a sizeable subculture of Sufi practices, with music, poetry, and even healing methods. All these Sufi orders and practices promote religious openness (not dogmatic fixation). This is expressed through the multifaith feature of the ongoing American Sufi discourses: Leyla al-Jerrahi, a Sufi woman of the Helveti-Jerrahi order, says: 'In our gatherings we often have people from other faiths come and sometimes even those without faith. Anyone that walks in the door is welcome'. Likewise, Shaykha Fariha Fatima al-Jerrahi, the spiritual guide of the Nur Ashki Jerrahi Sufi order in New York City, insists: 'The banquet represents the return of us all into God through the mystical body of the blessed Muhammad, enlightened Fatima, holy Jesus, exalted Mariam, sublime Moses, truthful Abraham, and all the sources of truth, Buddha, Avatar, Sage, women and men from the East and West merged in God, peace be upon them all' (Dressler, 2010: 442). No wonder, Sufism, as a form of 'mystical Islam', is considered as deeply sensitive to other cultures, being accommodative to other traditions and generally tolerant to peoples of other faiths (Alam, 2020).

However, Sufism is not something in the margin but a central thread that runs through all layers of society: as such, it has, throughout history, also connected to the political realities in various ways (Atlas, 2016). In the context of the US policy-making circles, it is widely presumed that neo-Sufism will draw more attention as it moves beyond merely spiritual matters into the social, political, and even economic realms. On 24 October 2003, the International Security Program of 'The Nixon Center' hosted a conference in Washington to explore how Sufism relates to US foreign policy goals. Reporting the outcomes of this conference, Baran (2004: 6–7) mentions:

> [According to H. Mirahmadi, executive director, Islamic Supreme Council of America], the secular nature of the American political system [makes it] difficult to imagine US policymakers openly endorsing the value of Sufism. However . . . if the US can approach assistance programs holistically, keeping in mind the culture and history of the various countries, it may find itself able to help such nations regain their lost heritage. A very real incentive for the US

> to do so is to deflect some of the increasing criticism from Muslims that the war on terror is purposely directed at destroying Islam. . . . [There are] three specific ways in which the United States could help. . . . First is in the preservation and/or reconstruction of shrines of Saints and their associated centers of learning . . . . Second is in the preservation and translation of ancient manuscripts. . . . Thirdly, the US could be helpful in the creation and funding of educational centers that focus on ancient history and civilization . . . with a particular emphasis on the precedent of religious and ethnic toleration.

Amidst the growing hope that the United States would win the war on terror, there seems to be an increasing recognition among the US foreign policy-making circles that the more difficult war is the 'war of ideas', that is, the struggle over the ideas of modernity, secularism, pluralism, democracy, and real economic development. In a bid to deal with this war of ideas, academic initiatives have been made to bridge the gap between the study of American contemporary religious movements (that variously promote their agendas of modernity, secularism, pluralism, democracy, and economic development) and Sufi studies (Dickson, 2015). In addition, scholarly investigations have been undertaken to diagnose the possible pros and cons of the interbreeding of Islamic Studies and the studies of Western esotericism (Sorgenfrei, 2018). While it is broadly recognized that the First Great Awakening crossed lines of class, race, and gender, thereby mobilizing both African Americans and Native Americans towards eclectic forms of Protestantism that blended aspects of both groups' traditional cultures (Boyer et al., 1998: 87), it is critical to investigate if neo-Sufism, with its emphasis on the individual's inner experience of the divine, would be capable of blurring the rigid lines between confessions and reduce the pressure orthodoxy and orthopractice put on believers.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

By integrating tenets of Oriental religions and nodding to the genius of foreign poets, the Transcendentalists moulded some of the basic American identitarian narratives as permeable and hybrid. In the same way, Sufism, even in its very controversial Rūmī phenomenon incarnation, has taken root in the American imagination due to its compatibility with American multi-faith and multicultural aspirations. It has been argued that Sufism, as a form of 'mystical Islam', readily becomes integrated into different local cultures, just like different local cultures easily get infused into Sufism. As a by-product of this cross-cultural pollination, the trivializations of Sufism have become abundant. Nonetheless, there are enough American authors who have

productively and respectfully embedded Sufism in their writings and turned it into a powerful hybrid discourse which originated in a non-US space but has, in the course of the centuries, grown and transformed side by side with US culture. This hybrid discourse has contributed to the shaping of pluralism with the Transcendentalists, it has proven to be compatible with autochthonous discussions such as Awakening theology and civil religion, and it has vigorously resurfaced as a counterpoint to Islamophobic rhetoric. If Bellah's vision of civil religion is related to America's former times of trial that grappled with the issues of slavery and independence, Sufism – in its 'Rūmī phenomenon' avatar – is meaningful as it offers a solution to America's present times of trial when American values of multiculturalism and tolerance have been harshly put to the test.

NOTES

1. Though it is true that some of the recent uses of Sufism in the United States have included its objectification for commercial and decorative purposes, certainly, the bland Sufi aesthetics of Madonna concerts and DKNY fashion shows, or the selling of 'Sufi jewellery' on Etsy, are manifestations of a dubious Sufi materialism. However, the analytical framework of this chapter will not linger on cases of predatory cultural appropriation, but on those American authors and public figures who have productively integrated Sufism in American cultural discourses, thereby focusing upon the potential for cultural exchange, growth, and empowerment that the American engagements with Sufism have brought and continue to bring.

2. Chauncy (1742: 5), one of the most fervent critics of the Awakening theology, speaks harshly about the 'enthused individuals' (or 'disturbers of the peace of the world'): 'They are above the force of argument, beyond conviction from calm and sober address to their understandings. As for them, they are distinguished persons; GOD himself speaks inwardly and immediately to their souls . . . they feel the hand of GOD moving them within, and the impulses of the SPIRIT; and cannot be mistaken in what they feel'.

3. Chauncy (1742: 6) discusses punishments for the enthused individuals but recommends that they must be treated benevolently, even 'with tenderness', because they act 'under the influence of a bad mind, as a deluded imagination'.

4. In a similar vein, the Sufi mystic Bulleh Shah asks: 'Time and time again you go to temples and mosques, but have you ever entered your own heart? Destroy the mosque, destroy the temple. . . . But never break the human heart, as God dwells in hearts' (Unher and Bano, 2010: 11).

5. El-Zein believes that the authors associated with the Rūmī phenomenon are mainly interested in extracting a general spirituality from Sufi literature, while Rūmī's writing *Mathnawī* draws very much from the Qu'ranic stories (and *hadith*).

However, she also claims that in no country outside the Islamic world can one find such an amazing attraction towards the writings of Rūmī. In the spirit of a global dialogue, one must be wary of dismissing the whole of these uses and practices as predatory.

6. In contrast to the charges of 'spiritual colonialism' or 'cultural appropriation', Appiah (2018: 208) remarks: 'All cultural practices and objects are mobile; they like to spread, and almost all are themselves creations of intermixture'. According to Appiah, charges of cultural appropriation often obfuscate the complexity of cultural phenomena: cultural appropriation is not per se an offense but becomes problematic when accompanied by trivialization.

7. Robert Frager is an American social psychologist of a Jewish descent. In 1981, he converted to Islam and later became a Sufi *shaikh* of the Halveti-Jerrahi order by the name of Ragip Frager al-Jerrahi. His community is based in California and his mentor was the renowned Turkish American Sufi Muzaffer Ozak. Frager's main publications in the field of Sufism include the edited volume of Ozak's talks 'Love is the Wine: Talks of a Sufi Master in America' (1987), the anthology 'Essential Sufism' (1997), and the more recent 'Sufi Talks: Teachings of an American Sufi Sheihk' (2012).

8. Chittick (2005: 73) accompanies his explanation with the following lines of Rūmī's poetry:

> Thou art a lover of God,
> And God is such that when He comes there is not a single hair of thee (remaining).
> At that look (of His) a hundred like thee vanish away . . .
> Thou art a shadow . . . and in love with the sun:
> the sun comes, the shadow is naughted speedily.

9. Elsewhere, Emerson (2010: 391) advises not to 'require description of the countries towards which you sail . . . tomorrow you arrive there and know them by inhabiting them'.

10. In delivering his State of the Union message on 29 January 2002, president George W. Bush branded three countries – Iran, Iraq, and North Korea – as rogue states that he said harboured, financed, and aided terrorists. Speaking less than five months after al-Qaida-linked terrorists – none of them citizens of the states Bush named – attacked New York and Washington, the president said these three countries constituted an 'axis of evil' – a phrase that became a hallmark of his administration's foreign policy (Glass, 2019). The protests in response to the label 'axis of evil' that the United States had assigned to a few Muslim states symbolized worldwide concern for the narrative of al-Qaida and demonstrated anti-American sentiment not only in the Muslim world but also in the West (Shahi, 2017).

11. In 1908, a play entitled 'The Melting Pot' by Israel Zangwill opened at the Columbia Theater in Washington D.C. The play revolved around the story of David Quixano, a Jewish immigrant who came to the United States after his family was slaughtered in a Russian pogrom. In the play, David Quixano sees the United States as a land of universal love and brotherhood, a God's Crucible, the great Melting Pot,

where all the races of Europe were melting and reforming. The play received huge acclamation; the then US president Roosevelt himself applauded the play! For details, see Shumsky (1975).

12. The earliest appearance of Sufism in America goes back to the migration of some Albanian Muslims to North America in the first part of the twentieth century, and to such South Asian Sufis as Hazrat Inayat Khan and Bawa Muhyiddin. They were followed by Sufi masters from Turkey, Iran, and some Arab countries. The Mawlawi order (Mevlevi in Turkish, known popularly as the whirling dervishes) is among the best-known Sufi orders in the United States. For an in-depth discussion on how Sufism is developing in the modern American landscape, as well as globally, see Xavier (2018).

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Chapter 10

The European Discourse on Sufism: On the Appeal of 'Moderate Islam'

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Weary of form, I came towards attributes;
Each attribute said, 'Enter here, for I am the green sea'. (Rumi, 2010)

Sufism has a long-drawn-out history of reception by, and engagement with, European scholarships. Beginning with the translation of Islamic texts in the eleventh century, Sufism became a direct object of intellectual inquiry around the sixteenth century, though earlier mentions are found in travel accounts such as those of the Georgius de Hungaria (1481) (Lewis, 2003). More systematic knowledge grew through the eighteenth–nineteenth centuries, with a widening popularity by the late twentieth century. At times, earlier exchanges between Western neo-Platonism and Eastern Gnosticism are posited as chains of Greek influence on Sufi apprehensions of the divine. But the proof of direct contact between Syrian ascetics and Egyptian Gnostics is limited (Morewedge, 1992). In modern times, Sufi texts and rituals have fascinated European scholars and public alike. This is partly due to the popular works that present Sufism as a cultural-religious experience transcending identity-bound ordinary life. In the realm of International Relations (IR), the functional viewpoint – that sees Sufi orders as a 'form of moderate Islam' – is often mobilized to attain Western-desired political outcomes: for instance, Sufi orders struggling to resist terrorism and to stabilize volatile multi-ethnic political cultures of Afghanistan, Morocco, and Egypt. But this functional viewpoint not only masks the fact that Sufi orders have posed staunch resistance against Western imperial powers in Central Asia, Algeria, Egypt, and Chechnya, and, to a limited extent, in Syria and Iraq but also misses the opportunities to utilize the 'Sufi attributes' to build relational identities in a pluralized, globalizing world that demands new solutions to a host of new and entrenched problems. A key Sufi attribute revolves around the experience

of the 'Real' (see later), and this experience, in turn, allows mundane political identities to reach beyond the normal bounds of state, nation, ethnicity, and rigid religious affiliations. In a post-secular age, this Sufi approach is able to inspire innovative political actions that can surpass the boundaries of identity-bound religious/cultural/civilizational communities in order to implement adaptive strategies for multilayered communities. Many such strategies can be found in the works of Al-Ghazālī, Jalil al-Din Muhammad Rūmī, Sayyid Haydar Amuli, Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sulami, Al-Hujwiri, and in the transcultural tales of Nasrudin Hodja, among others. The multifaceted insights of Sufism permit a widening of the Western imagination at a time when the European political project is beset by challenge and crisis. The notion of an imagined and shared community had driven the European Union (EU) beyond the functional spill over from an economic grouping to a renewed pole of influence on the global stage in the late twentieth century, a process that went into rapid decline after 2009 (Vilpisauskas, 2013). Against this backdrop, this chapter argues about how a thoughtful appreciation of, and interaction with, the non-European worldview of Sufism can have a progressive impact on Europe's relational identities, thereby allowing it to pursue a more proactive cosmopolitanism in global politics in the challenging twenty-first century.

SUFISM AND THE EUROPEAN IMAGINATION

The initial links between Sufism and European intellectual traditions were established in the eleventh century. The Arabic and Persian texts (containing components of Sufism) were translated, sometimes via Hebrew intermediaries, with major centres for the distribution of such knowledge in Spain, Sicily, and Italy, though Antioch and Constantinople were also early encounter spaces in this process. In the late Middle Ages, such knowledge became the basis for the recovery of the lost classical Greek sources.[1] Later, the Arabic and Muslim philosophical debates were reflectively employed to respond to the controversies within Catholic and Protestant thoughts. By the thirteenth century, Latin translations of the selected ideas from Al-Ghazālī's autobiography were aroused in the context of Dominican efforts to convert Muslims and Jews in reconquered Spain (Griffel, 2011). Eventually, Sufism in Europe came to be 'perceived not only as [*a* type of] Islamic mysticism or esotericism, but as *the* mystical/esoteric expression of Islam', and either criticized or embraced on these grounds (Sorgenfrei, 2018: 146). While earlier accounts by travellers and diplomats showed a fascination with Sufi 'dervishes' (or Sufi ascetic fraternity),[2] it was in the late seventeenth century that Sufism came to be acknowledged as a proper object of academic investigation.[3]

Consequently, Sufism became known in varying degrees to a wide range of European scholars, such as Jean Bodin (1530–1596), Barthelemy d'Herbelot (1625–1695), William Jones (1746–1794), August Schmolders (1803–1867), and Ernest Renan (1832–1892), all having an interest in interpreting the works of Al-Ghazālī and/or Rūmī (Griffel, 2011).

A few observers even suggest that Al-Ghazālī (particularly, his work *Deliverance from Error*) could have had some influence on Rene Descartes (1596–1650), although, this remains a contested conjecture (Ruddle-Miryamoto, 2017). Yet other observers find echoes of Sufism in the sonnets of Shakespeare and the works of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (Acim, 2018). Besides, a few influential European figures – such as the German philosopher Hegel, the Danish fiction-author Hans Christian Andersen, and the Prussian diplomat Christian von Bunsen – are known for their infatuation with Sufism (especially, the writings of Rūmī). In the early twentieth century, European writers such as Martin Buber, Mircea Eliade, Titus Burckhardt, Aldous Huxley, and Doris Lessing took interest in Sufism. And European mystics such as Gurdjieff and Ouspensky incorporated Sufi ideas and practices as key elements in their own thoughts (Ouspensky, 1949; Gurdjieff, 1991). Most certainly, the translations by Reynold A. Nicholson, Arthur Arberry, Idries Shah, Annemarie Schimmel, and Coleman Barks among others have made major Sufi poetry and concepts accessible to contemporary European audiences (Arberry, 1950; Al-Hujwiri, 1976; Shah, 1968, and Shah, 1996).[4]

Ever since the late twentieth century, Sufism (along with its literary culture and ritualistic practices) has attracted not only the academics and religious adepts but also the wider public. As the foci on religious saints and their tombs, music, chanting, poetry, humour, and multimedia artistic products had contributed to the spread of Sufi ideas first along the Silk Road and then into India and Southeast Asia (Zakaria, 1988), the individualized, eclectic, and critical form of Sufism has witnessed a growing popularity in Europe, especially because it assures a cultural-religious experience exceeding the identity-bound ordinary life. Perhaps, the appeal of Sufism has enhanced among modern European populace because they are more committed to this cultural-religious experience than the strictures of Islamic law[5] (Piraino, 2016). Notably, the stereotyping of Sufism as an esoteric and heterodox free-thinking has aided its popularity among modern European audiences, despite the historical fact that Sufi orders have been functioning as parallel institutions interacting with state authorities, an important political process evolving through 1100–1500 (Green, 2012).[6] At present, Sufi orders have spread throughout the globe: at least forty different Sufi orders were known in the mid-nineteenth century; and today there are over seventy orders with hundreds of thousands of people directly involved in teaching or ritual circles and millions more inspired by their traditions (Ernst, 1997).

In Europe, the influence of Sufism has expanded through decades of Muslim migration, combined with the tendency of many Western converts to be especially attracted to Islam in its Sufi form, as well as the increased activity of Sufi orders such as the Alawiyya and Naqshbandiyya (Duran, 1991). Evidently, the cultural complex of Sufism in today's Europe is inclined towards three trends: (1) traditional Sufi organizations often formed by second or third generation of migrants; (2) European esotericism focused around figures such as Rene Guenon, Frithjof Schuon, and New Age groups (often bearing a synthesizing spirit); and (3) scholarly Sufism as shaped by both Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers (Piraino, 2016). Of course, these trends have been challenged to some extent by the controversies over the role of Muslims in Europe since 2001, with growing tensions between Sufis and stricter, activist Salafi groups, especially in the United Kingdom (Hamid, 2016). Yet many Sufi orders continue to operate in different European states (Green, 2012; Acim, 2018): for instance, Alawiyya (in France, Switzerland, and Germany), Budshishiyya (in United Kingdom and France), Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya (in France, Switzerland, Germany, England, and to a lesser degree in Italy), Ahmadiyya Idrisiyya Shadhiliyya (in Italy and France), and Jerrahiyya-Khalwatiyya (previously in the Balkans and presently in Italy). While the Bektashis have had a historical role in Albania, Bulgaria, and Macedonia, the Chistis and Qadiris are found in the United Kingdom alongside the Naqshbandiyya groups (Pew Survey, 2010).

The Mevlevi order (famous for its poetry, music, dance, and contemplative practices) had already developed a strong presence in Austria, England, Germany, and Switzerland by the 1990s, and nowadays it has acquired an almost global reach (Lewis, 2003). Some of these groups have retained their traditional rules of conduct, whereas other groups, for example, the circle of converts under Nazim Qibrisi and the followers of Frithjof Schuon, have reduced their ritualistic restrictions to the point where they are denounced by more conformist Sufi orders (Zarcone, 1999). Right now, the global presence of Sufism can be sensed through its increased visibility on the Internet, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, alongside many online channels, stretching beyond and above the territoriality of the state (Piraino, 2016). Even the early extension of Sufi brotherhoods can be seen as a trans-territorial process which was at the forefront of proto-globalization, influencing Eurasian empires and the politics of modern successor states from Morocco to Indonesia (Salvatore, 2018). With this historical background, it is not surprising that the present-day Sufi orders are seen as essentially transnational in formation and outlook, creating networks of information that link diverse subcommunities across the globe.

Moreover, the Sufi orders seem to have gained popularity in Europe at the same time as the crisis of religion emerged in Western thought, impacted by

modernism and the rise of science. This crisis led to a hollowing out of belief, leaving many Europeans to search for alternative forms of inspiration and affiliation. Zarcone (1999: 120) comments:

> It could be said that Sufism has found its *raison d'être* in the West as a structure replacing the initiatory Western society and religions and that it is on this basis that cross-fertilization between the oral tradition of Islam and those of Western esotericism has taken place.

It is true that the spreading out of Muslim communities in Europe, coupled with an enhanced mutual interaction between Islamic and European cultures, has allowed a wide number of Sufism-inspired European intellectuals and artists to occupy a prominent place in determining the wider rational discourse on Islam in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Pew Survey, 2010) – for instance, French philosopher Henry Corbin, French author Michel Chodkiewicz, French rapper Abd al Malik, and French-speaking Moroccan anthropologist Fouzi Skali. Nevertheless, the hope that such rational voices would produce workable solutions to the long-term problems of religious extremism lying at the root of various global conflicts has been somewhat overtaken by several destructive trends that have been on the rise since 2001. While nice in theory and certainly appealing to Western/European governments, the idealization of Sufism (particularly, the institutionalized frameworks of Sufi orders) might have serious counterproductive effects on public policy so far as the goal of curbing violence is concerned. In fact, the policy initiatives centred on Sufi orders may have (un)willingly contributed to the very radicalization processes they were meant to counter (Philippon, 2018): thus, put into practice, the Sufi orders or organizations (as a form of 'moderate Islam') have not always succeeded in delivering positive results.

THE FUNCTIONAL USE OF SUFISM AS A FORM OF 'MODERATE ISLAM'

To resolve the problem of religious extremism, Sufism as a 'form of moderate Islam' has been eagerly sponsored by different Western/European governments: notably, Sufi orders are used not only to resist militancy and terrorism but also to moderate the volatile political culture in Afghanistan and to fight the radical Islamic State in Syria and elsewhere (Muedini, 2016). Since Sufi cultural traditions are relatively more open to diverse influences, they are considered as more tolerant towards the multiplicity of local customs (*ādat*), and more critical of the misuse of political authority by both authoritarian governments and militant organizations. As such, several Western/European

governments have begun to see Sufism as 'a culturally authentic counterweight' against militant Islamist groups (Pew Survey, 2010). In fact, states as diverse as Russia, Pakistan, Algeria, and Morocco have infrequently supported Sufi orders for either domestic or foreign policy purposes. However, providing support to Sufi orders for domestic or foreign policy purposes is far from simple. This recently became apparent when the Sufi Muslim Council (SMC) was launched by the Naqshbandiyya-Haqqaniyya Sufi order in England in 2006 as a moderate group of silent majority of Muslims who differed from the radical Islamists (Sorgenfrei, 2018). As soon as this moderate group went public, it created an unanticipated controversy. The Pew Survey (2010) reports:

> [T]he efforts by European governments to promote Sufism have not always been successful. For instance, the Sufi Muslim Council in the UK – which was founded with the encouragement of the government in the aftermath of the July 2005 London transit bombings – has been widely viewed with suspicion by British Muslims, who question its credibility as a representative of the community. Many see the Council as an attempt by the government to displace larger and more established organizations, such as the Muslim Council of Britain, which is widely regarded as the main national umbrella body for Muslim organizations in the UK, and the British Muslim Forum, a grassroots group representing the majority strain of Sufism in the UK. Others perceive the Sufi Muslim Council as a blatant attempt by the government to co-opt traditional Sufism for political purposes. These debates are taking place against the backdrop of broader discussions that have been going on since 9/11 over how Western governments can promote various forms of 'moderate Islam'.

Ultimately, the UK government had to distance itself from the SMC in order to avoid divisive responses from Muslim communities (Muedini, 2016). Thus, even though Sufi orders may seek to represent the moderate, centrist views within the wider spectrum of political Islam, this centre has not been an easy place to define or sustain. Ever since the 1970s, the concept of Islamic moderation (*wasatiyyah*) has been projected as the mainstream Islamic thought (Hanapi, 2014): in practice, this thought calls for a middle path, balanced life, fairness, and understanding as some of the distinctive attributes of the 'community of believers', including those Muslims (or 'people of the centre') who use independent reason (*ijtihad*) to avoid extremism and resist oppression (Saad, 2006; Baker, 2012). However, it is crucial to admit that this Islamic moderation can be occasionally misused as a hollow political slogan: such a slogan does not genuinely intend to settle the contradictory attitudes that the Sufi and Salafi Islamist movements uphold toward government authority and public political actions (Hanapi, 2014; Hamid, 2016). Hence, the image of Sufi orders as inherently cosmopolitan, though partly true, should not mislead

one to think that all Sufi orders can generate movements that are consistently pacifist or humanist or pro-Western in orientation.[7]

Conversely, various Sufi orders are known for their strong (and, at times, armed) resistance against Western/European imperial powers. In the case of Chechnya, for example, throughout the nineteenth century and the post-1994 period, the Sufi orders of Naqshbandiyya and Quadiriyya had tussles with both the expanding Russian state and the purist Wahhabi forces (Bennigsen, 1999). Although the external purist Wahhabi forces attempted to gain ground in Chechnya, they lost credibility when they tried to confront the Sufi orders and rejected Chechen nationalism. In due course, the more radical Quadiriyya Sufi group began to dominate in the mountains where the traditional nationalist clans lived (Whitmeyer, 2015). However, the Wahhabi and Salafi influences have been felt in nearby areas of the Caucasus region, especially Dagestan, resulting in extended Russian security/military interventions. Most Chechen leaders, though Muslims, were not Islamic extremists but were drawn from the professional classes, while others were students or drawn from the Soviet military, for example, Maskhadov and Dudayev (Fredholm, 2000). In the past, the Sufi brotherhoods were seen by Soviet authorities as either bandit criminals or radical breeding grounds for anti-Russian elements (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1985). But this began to change from 2000 onwards when the local leader, Ahmad Kadyrov, a former Grand Mufti and member of Quadiriyya Sufi order, chose to align with the Russians in order to push out Salafist opposition groups. After the assassination of Ahmad Kadyrov, his son Ramzan Kadyrov carried forward the policy of opposing the pan-Islamic *jihadism* of the 'Caucasus Emirate' initiated in Dagestan by Doku Umarov (Whitmeyer, 2015). Against this backdrop, Putin's support to Ramzan Kadyrov indicated the Russian government's desire to undermine more militant Islamic organizations in the wider region and to localize the conflict by supporting a known Chechen leadership[8] (Muedini, 2016). However, the 'form of moderate Islam' practised by Ramzan Kadyrov (or by Quadiriyya Sufi order) remained chained to the Russian government's interests both at local and federal levels. As such, it had little to do with the inclusive, tolerant, and mystical Sufi attributes that remain central to the European imagination.

Generally, the Sufis and their shrines have been the targets of Islamist extremists: for instance, the Sufis have been opposed by the Taliban in Afghanistan and the strict Deobandis in South Asia. In Syria, the Naqshbandiyya Sufi order and related groups are caught in a multisided civil war, which is yet to be resolved. And, in Iraq, the army of Naqshbandiyya Sufi order, which aims to remove the US and Iranian influences, has been participating in a dreadful warfare with not only the Iraqi government but also the Islamic State forces[9] (Ahmad, 2018; Hensman, 2018). Despite the fact that Sufi orders have acted against the imperial and local threats to the

survival of Islam, the innermost attributes of Sufism prefer to focus on *jihad* ('inner development'): as per the Persian Gnostic, Sayyid Haydar Amuli (fourteenth century) (1989), *jihad* implies the struggle against the self and against the doubts and misgivings of the speculative intellect. In this sense, *jihad* can be 'of the heart', or 'of the pen', but only under certain conditions, in self-defence or defence of the oppressed who cannot protect themselves, 'of the sword' (Olesen, 1995; Shah, 2013). Furthermore, a parallel concept in Sufism, *mujahada*, calls for an intense search for mystical life: following the tradition of the Prophet, this mystical life considers the greater warfare related to the 'earnest striving with the carnal soul' as morally superior than the lesser warfare of the sword (Arberry, 1950: 75). Given the varied nature of warfare between Sufis and Islamist extremists in current global politics, it is crucial for the Western/European governments to realize that they face real dangers while seeking to promote one 'brand' of Islam over another. Muedini (2016: 205) warns:

> Promoting Sufism, particularly at the expense of other Islamic traditions, is highly problematic. The perception of Sufism as a Western, moderate, or tolerant form of Islam cements a dichotomy between 'good' and 'bad' understandings of the religion. Within the context of counterterrorism, such divisions can be damning. Categorizations of good and bad Muslims rely not on sound judgments of behaviour and actions but, rather, on simple labels based on the way in which people practice their faith. Groups that are seen as more political and willing to challenge government policies are criticized and are seen with skepticism. However, peaceful Muslims who are Westernized and minimize the role of their own faith (or at least present their religiosity in Western-approved ways), and take an impartial view of political affairs, are therefore viewed as good. . . . Leaders and policymakers cannot . . . base their decisions on what specific religious position a person follows. When this happens, all those who fall outside the state-sanctioned perceptions of Islam are viewed with hostility, even if they have done nothing to deserve the label.

Thus, a more informed approach must look beyond the usual Western/European strategy of providing support to Sufi orders for domestic or foreign policy purposes. One must be wary of those situations wherein some Sufi orders, in order to fulfil their vested political interests, might choose not to act in accordance with the Sufi attributes (e.g., following the middle path, balanced life, fairness, and understanding). And even if the Sufi orders genuinely try to act in accordance with the Sufi attributes, their alliance with state governments might raise suspicion among more extremist Islamist groups and other (non-)Muslim citizens. Therefore, instead of counting on the institutionalized frameworks of Sufi orders, it could be more sensible to pay attention to the innermost Sufi attributes that are far more promising in their ability to expand

Europe's relational identities beyond localized conflicts, thereby paving the way for a dynamic cosmopolitanism in a post-secular age.

SUFISM AND RELATIONAL IDENTITIES IN A POST-SECULAR AGE

The academic discipline of IR has begun to appreciate the importance of relational identities (Bucher and Jasper, 2016; Nordin and Smith, 2018). The extraordinary necessity of mainstreaming relational identities is largely felt in today's pluralized, globalizing world which faces ever-increasing instances of Islamophobia, racism, and ethnic tensions, triggered in part by the massive influx of refugees and asylum seekers into Europe since 2011 (Acim, 2018). In order to understand relational identities, one can bring in the Sufi attributes that emphasize the experience of the 'Real': here, the 'Real' equates with single, unified core reality located at the source of 'being/creation'. Since all political entities are commonly but differently connected to this source of 'being/creation', they essentially bear relational identities vis-à-vis each other. And these relational identities can become known only by stripping away of the veils of misapprehension, assumption, and prejudice (Ibn al-Arabī, 1980). Many a time, the veils of misapprehension, assumption, and prejudice are brought to life via assignment of 'names' or 'labels': in real-life situations, different individuals/groups carry different names/labels, for example, 'Zoroast', 'Jew', 'Hindu', 'Sindi', 'Islamist', and 'Sufi'. When different individuals/groups carry different names/labels as their rigid political identities, conflicts are born. Thus, in order to get rid of conflicts, Rūmī makes an appeal to go beyond different names/labels (or 'outwardly forms') and trace their 'inwardly meanings':

> The conflicts among men stem from names
> Trace back the meaning [or attributes] and achieve accord . . .
> Mind of the Universe! Point of view
> Makes all the difference we see between the believer, the Zoroast, and the Jew . . .
> Hindus praise me in terms of India
> And the Sindis praise me in terms of Sind . . .
> We do not look to language or to words
> We look inside to find intent and rapture. (Lewis, 2003: 405, 406, and 416)

The Sufi stress on inwardly meanings/attributes (not outwardly forms or names/labels) provides a multilayered view of reality: while the inwardly meanings/attributes stay closer to single, unified core reality (i.e., the 'Real'), the outwardly forms or names/labels subscribe to plural, separated political identities. And it is the earnest hunt for single, unified core reality (i.e. the

'Real') that compels one to question the outwardly forms of plural and separated political identities. In IR theory, the conventional knowledge of plural and separated political identities is made available to us through some established dichotomies, for instance, the 'positivist vs. constructivist' dichotomy. It is the Sufi-inspired discourses that can pave the way for surpassing such dichotomies. According to Shahi (2018: 265):

> [T]he Sufi principle of ontological immaterialism [i.e. triviality of outwardly forms/names/labels] – posited through the concepts of: 'universe as a mixed appearance of being and non-being' (*wahdat al-shuhud*); human existence as a possible assortment of non-being (*nist*), being (*hast*), and integrated/universal being (*al-insan al-kamil*); and the 'non-repetitive vastness of existence' (*al-tawassu' al-ilahi*) – can offer an *alternative (not just critical)* understanding of diverse explanations of reality in Eurocentric IR. . . . In fact, the inconsequentiality of ontology in Sufi understanding of human nature is emphasized by the concept of *al-insan al-kamil*, which aims to represent a *universalist (not exceptionalist)* standard of human perfection through an inquiry into the 'inner state' of human consciousness.

An inquiry into the inner state of human consciousness can play a vital role in reshaping of the norms for future construction of political identities operating at different levels of affiliation – religious, national, and supranational. For instance, being a 'European' can no longer simply mean being a Christian, French, or Westerner. It rather needs to embrace the deeper attributes of diverse religious/ethnic/geo-cultural orientations that provide avenues to the wider world (e.g. secular, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, African, and others). This kind of European cosmopolitanism would entertain a multicultural democratic engagement, thereby moving away from the narrow strictures of nationalism and state-based citizenship (Held, 1995; Hayden, 2004; Smith and Brassett, 2008). Practically, a multicultural democratic engagement can encourage a creative construction of political action that can cross the boundaries of identity-bound communities, such as the Hindu and Muslim communities, where shared interests in specific styles of music (e.g., Qawwali), joint use of shrines, and syncretic poetry have noticeably crossed narrow barriers of race and religion.[10] It is this syncretism and openness that makes Sufism popular as it negotiates with multiple religious/ethnic/geo-cultural domains. In fact, the Sufism of the Balkans and Eastern Europe has been influenced by the historical context of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, with its approach to the beauty, ritual, and the experience of the divine (Dalrymple, 2003; Norris, 2011). Likewise, in Greece, the stories of Nasrudin Hodja were possibly passed onto children as oral folk wisdom that transcended the fierce divisions between Greek and Turk.[11] Even modern Christian mystics and scholars such as the Trappist monk Thomas Merton have reached out

to Islam and Sufism to deepen their own spiritual teaching (Griffith, 2004). Indeed, for British commentator William Dalrymple (2003), Christianity and Islam are profoundly interwoven religions with alternative Jesus traditions spreading through Muslim communities from Spain to China. It seems Islam, in general, and Sufism, in particular, already recognized, embraced, and then fulfilled the earlier truths of Judaism and Christianity, recognizing the prophets and founders such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Joseph, Ezra, and Jesus (as expressed in Ibn al-Arabī 's well-known works *The Bezels of Wisdom* and *The Universal Tree and the Four Birds*).

Since the multicultural undercurrent of Sufism emphasizes tolerance, peace, and love, and shows more inclusive outlook than Wahhabi or Salafi doctrines (Acim, 2018), it readily provides a model of interfaith dialogue in today's post-secular age where religious affiliation is on the rise and where religious ideas work as crucial drivers of political change (Pew Survey, 2015). Unquestionably, the inhabitants of the twenty-first century are not living in a desecularized world; they are rather living in a world rich in religious ideas/experiences. These religious ideas/experiences have continued to evolve and remain important markers of political identities and actions even when formal religious institutions are in decline (Gorski et al., 2012). Quite justifiably, the need for, and difficulties of, interfaith dialogue and diplomacy have received increased attention in recent global politics. Fahy and Haynes (2018: 4) remark:

> Today the global field of interfaith comprises thousands of initiatives, from small local grassroots efforts to national-level conflict resolution and transnational organizations that span the globe. Some initiatives are more overtly theological, focusing on dialogue, with the goal of identifying and promoting a set of common values. Others bring together religious leaders and communities to identify common social and political goals that transcend religious difference, such as climate change, social justice, nuclear disarmament, and poverty alleviation.

At the present historical juncture, the European participation in global politics can derive motivation from two Sufi concepts that have formerly helped the Islamic cultures to survive under conditions of oppression or change: first, *khalwat dar anjuman* ('invisibility-in-the-crowd' or 'solitude within society'), which prescribes outwardly subsistence with the world and inwardly subsistence with God (or single, unified core reality/'Real'), and second, *safar dar watan* ('journey within the homeland'), which reminds us that the journey into the inner world is more important than external conditions (Olsen, 1995). Taken together, these strategies structure a psychological and social endurance, enabling the dedicated Sufis to function fruitfully in modern and Western societies.[12] As these Sufis are constantly involved in

meditation, they are permanently mobilized through an 'unending intensive spiritual and mental concentration' (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1985: 77). Furthermore, this spiritual and mental concentration empowers these Sufis to declare all earthly empires as ultimately impotent before the God's freewill. For them, it is nothing but the sincere trust in God's freewill (*tawakkul*) that removes fear and functions as the basis of any real liberation, valid service, or dialogue with either Muslims or Christians (Arberry, 1950; Urbaniak, 2014).

In practice, the sincere trust in God's freewill (*tawakkul*) also asks for a tolerant attitude towards disbelievers. Abu Abd Al-Rahman Al-Sulmani (2016), for example, notes the importance of maintaining good conduct with disbelievers (*hadith* 3), avoiding the shallow understanding of faith as mere means of wish-fulfilment and embellishment (*hadith* 7), and practicing generosity towards others (*hadith* 21), among other moral precepts. In a similar vein, Al-Ghazālī (1975), in his famous work, *The Duties of Brotherhood in Islam*, centralizes the relational identities by situating self-other relationship on the ethical principles of forgiveness, material assistance, loyalty, and sincerity. Since these ethical principles promote a willingness to have an open dialogue with, and a peaceful accommodation of, the worldviews of broader societies (Green, 2012), they can shape a non-exploitative diplomacy that goes beyond the sketchy definition of state interests in IR (Bidabad, 2011; Bidabad, 2012). As the Sufi concepts of *khalwat dar anjuman* ('invisibility-in-the-crowd' or 'solitude within society') and *safar dar watan* ('journey within the homeland') effectively guided the survival strategies of Islamic cultures under conditions of oppression and/or change in the past, they can also assist the adaptive strategies of other multilayered communities in present global politics, including the EU.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Since 1991, the EU had hoped to further expand as a supranational process, thereby incorporating diverse nationalities and cultures across wider Europe. This process, however, has faltered with economic crises, the inability to stabilize conditions in Eastern Europe, frozen progress on the membership of Turkey, and a growing Euro-scepticism as symbolized by the turbulent BREXIT process. At present, the EU aspires to stabilize the extended zones in its South and East via economic and diplomatic means, guiding its European Neighbourhood Policy and Common Foreign and Security Policy. However, these efforts have been somewhat weakened due to geopolitical instabilities driven by tensions with Russia and the impact of crises in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya. These vicious trends, combined with substantial immigration of refugees and a nationalist rebound in many states, seem to

have delimited the cosmopolitan image of Europe as a political construct that could embrace non-Christian communities. Of late, this has challenged the national narrative of even major European states: for instance, the assimilative narrative of France based on its democratic and human rights traditions, or the humanitarian and global agenda of a tolerant, active, and progressive Germany (Hyde-Price, 2015; Steinmeier, 2016; Federal Government, 2016). Under these circumstances, the adherence to Sufi attributes can stimulate a renewed cosmopolitan project in Europe; a cosmopolitan project that could work beyond the confines of dogmatic religions or other narrow political identities, thereby allowing the meeting of East and West. Since the Sufi attributes seek to move past divisive blockages of self-identity towards a positive embrace of 'other/s', they provide a key to a better inter-communal future. Thus, rather than treating Sufism as a free-floating cultural resource or vibrant Internet spiritualism (Piraino, 2016), it must be reinvented as a worldview that could boost the shared concerns of human beings as dynamic agents in global politics, with inherent capacities as citizens of the universe, not just claimants of rights to be recognized or given by states or constitutional orders. In fact, the presence of Sufi groups and practices in Europe and reactions to them could serve as a barometer of how far European society has been able to transform itself so as to embrace religious and cultural diversity (Rytter, 2016). Instead of the functional use of Sufi orders as tools in the spectrum of geopolitical and ideological conflicts, the adoption of the Sufi approach to relational identities can remind Europe to sustain itself as a post-imperial civilizational process, rather than a mere conglomerate of states.

NOTES

1. P. Kunitzsch (2016: 4) informs: 'Mediaeval Europe . . . had almost totally lost its contact with the Greek sources. Works of Greek or Hellenistic origins were only read in Latin translations. . . . [In addition], there exists a Mediaeval European tradition of al-Sufi'. In fact, the early folk astronomy of the Arabs was radically altered, without being swept away, by the discovery of ancient Greek, also Indian and Persian, sources; by far the most important of these was the 'Almagest' of Ptolemy.

2. In Europe, by the early ninth century, 'Sufis' were known as those people who demonstrated extreme, and sometimes excessive, piety (Sorgenfrei, 2018). In so doing, they tried to transmit religious insights based on either their own experience or via 'hadith' (i.e. the Prophet's words and deeds), thereby claiming to go back to the time of the Prophet. Also, Sufism involved an oral tradition of authority descending down through a chain (*silsila*) of religious leaders (Zarcone, 1999).

3. For scholarly disputes related to the origins of the term 'Sufi' or 'Sufism' (*taṣawwuf* in Arabic), see Arberry (1950); Lings (1969); Danner (1973); Al-Hujwiri (1976); and Al-Ghazālī (1994).

4. For a comprehensive account on how Sufism made inroads in the American literary culture, see chapter 9.

5. However, the Sufi orders (that tend to mellow down the strictures of Islamic law) have often come under fire from those opposing groups who wish to position themselves as 'true' Islamic authorities, for instance, the attack on Sufi orders in Arabia by Wahhabi reformists, early confrontations with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and the killing of the renowned Sufi Singer Amjad Sabri by Taliban gunmen in Pakistan. The Sufi orders have been rejected on grounds of not being 'truly' Muslim in parts of Central Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and South-eastern Europe (Pew Survey, 2012). For an analysis of the limited political capacity of Sufi orders during the Arab Spring and events in Egypt from 2011, see Ladjal and Benaouda (2015).

6. For instance, the Mevlevi and Naqshbandi Sufi orders were formerly accepted by political elites within the Ottoman Empire. Though these Sufi orders later came under the control of Ataturk's modernizing Turkish state (Hendrich, 2011), their possible return to existing Turkish politics is broadly speculated (Cornell, 2015). For a detailed discussion on this issue, see chapter 7.

7. For critical commentaries on the dangers of rarefication associated with the conversion of any religious/social movement as an 'ism', see Cantwell (1978) and Sorgenfrei (2018).

8. One might even wonder if the Russian strategy of supporting the 'enemy-of-your-enemy' (or supporting the Sufis as the enemy of Russia's enemy, that is, militant Islamic organizations) may prove out to be insufficient or short-lived in the long run (contra Whitmeyer, 2015).

9. According to Sorgenfrei (2018: 152), the *Jaysh rijāl al-ṭarīqa al-Naqshbandiyya* (or 'the army of the men of the Naqshbandi [Sufi group]') has been involved in the battle over Iraq and Syria since the civil war began in 2011. The Naqshbandi Army, as it is also called, originated primarily among pro-Saddam Hussein Naqshbandi Sufis sometime after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, but formally announced its existence after the execution of Saddam Hussein in 2006. Today, the Naqshbandi Army can be described as a militant Islamist-Sufi organization with strong nationalist tendencies and thus very similar to the precise Islamist tendencies against which the Naqshbandi-Haqqani define themselves.

10. The North Indian Qawwali singer Ja'far Budauni combined Arabic verses about the Prophet's relative 'Ali', along with Hindi couplets about the infant God 'Krishna', interpreted from a Sufi viewpoint. Likewise, Bengali bards, called Bauls, also mix their songs with elements drawn from Tantric and yogi practices (Ernst, 1997).

11. This insight has been passed on by a personal informant, who heard these stories as a child, as told by her Greek father. Such accounts probably circulated in families in Cyprus and northern Greece, as well as among those who returned from Anatolia after the population exchanges mandated by the League of Nations in 1923.

12. These strategies are particularly popular among the Naqshbandiyya Sufi order scattered across Europe, where the followers often remain 'in the world' living apparently everyday roles, adapting to everyday modern society (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1985). Even if female Sufi congregations are small and sometimes separated (Silvers,

2014), the necessity for adapting to everyday modern society has enabled women Sufi teachers/masters (*shaikhas/pirs*) to function within the Naqshbandiyya and many other Sufi orders.

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Part 4

REVISITING SUFISM AS A GLOBAL INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY

Chapter 11

The Sufi Global International Relations Theory: Promises and Perplexities

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The Prophet said, 'My ascension
is not to be preferred over Jonah's ascension.
Mine was to the heavens and his was a descent [into the whale's belly],
for proximity to the Real is beyond measure.
Proximity lies not in going high or low.
Proximity to the Real lies in being freed from the prison of existence'
(Rustom, 2007).

Why is humankind jarred with a perpetual quest for freedom? Is this quest for freedom not a sign of enduring enslavement? What enslaves humankind? Is this chronic sensation of some or other form of enslavement the totality of human reality? Or is there a possible exit from this sensation? Isn't there a possible reality beyond this sensation of enslavement that awaits disclosure? And what happens after this disclosure? Is this disclosure an instantaneous encounter with freedom? Or is this disclosure no more than a promise of an upcoming freedom? If nothing else, how does one find proximity to freedom? How does one know when one finds proximity to freedom? Besides what does one do when one finds proximity to freedom? The 'why', 'what', and 'how' of freedom has preoccupied a great deal of political thinking. From time to time, political thinkers have spotted varied culprits of the lack of human freedom: for Plato, it is 'base desires'; for Aristotle, it is 'previous choice of actions'; for Augustine, it is 'fall from grace of the earliest human beings'; for Descartes, Leibniz, and Spinoza, it is 'God's determinism' or 'determinism in the laws of nature'; for Hobbes and Locke, it is 'absence of self-determinism'; for Rousseau, it is *amour propre* or self-conscious civilized 'social being' whose freewill is laden with the opinion of others; for Kant, it is 'absence of rational autonomy'; for Marx, it is 'alienation'

and 'exploitation' in capitalist surroundings; for Buddha, it is 'inability not to exploit oneself'; for Gandhi, it is 'absence of self-rule'; and for Lao Tzu, it is 'unfreedom from one's own ideas'. These and many more Western and non-Western ideas of human freedom have had significant impacts on (inter) national political life. But how could the entrance of Sufism into this existing gamut of ideas make a difference in the performance of contemporary global politics? The preceding chapters of this study revolved around this central question. Since freedom in Sufism stands for 'freedom from the prison of existence' – that is, the annihilation of 'temporal I-ness', not just going high or low on an existential scale – different chapters of this study tried to use this insight to not only ascertain the Sufi meanings of political reality but also activate the Sufi meanings of political reality to assess the prospects of a Sufi Global International Relations (IR) theory. The present chapter is divided into three sections. The first section summarizes the general findings of this entire course of study. In the light of these findings, the second section lays out a full-fledged structure of the Sufi Global IR theory. Finally, the third section delineates the promises and perplexities of this theory, thereby setting out agendas for new research.

GATHERING THE THREADS

The 'Global' slant of contemporary IR has become slowly but surely visible through the growing works on non-Western IR. However, these growing works on non-Western IR regularly grapple with some unsettled contestations: (1) History versus Philosophy, (2) Chronology versus Covariance, (3) Language versus Concept, (4) Culture versus Economy, and (5) Single versus Plural. Generally, a non-Western idea (that underpins non-Western IR) is assessed in terms of its historical execution in a particular part of the globe, not in terms of its philosophical relevance to all parts of the globe. This, in turn, prompts a futile chronological battle about which part of the globe (Western or non-Western?) must be given greater credit for the origin and first use of an idea for IR study. This chronological battle is futile because it rejects the probability of covariance whereby several variants of the same idea could coincidentally develop in distant historical-geographical zones. Furthermore, even when an idea is qualified as a valid part of non-Western scholarship, it is habitually reduced to a mere linguistic duplication of the established conceptual inventory of Eurocentric IR. It would seem as if no non-Western idea could possibly traverse the conceptual exteriors of Eurocentric IR. And if a non-Western idea could possibly traverse the conceptual exteriors of Eurocentric IR, that idea ought to be hastily tied down to the cultural specificities (not economic peculiarities) of non-Western parts of the

globe. Thus, Global IR – as an array of ideational inputs from non-Western parts of the globe – bears cultural plurality but economic singularity. And it is this cultural plurality in the face of economic singularity that forms the crux of the problems that haunt contemporary global politics.[1] To be sure, a number of these prevailing disciplinary myths can be broken if Sufism is evoked as an unexploited intellectual resource to enhance Global IR (for an elaborate discussion, see chapter 1).

To begin with, Sufism not only owns a rich repertoire of historical execution but also maintains a vibrant debate on universal philosophical relevance. As opposed to Edmund Husserl's flawed hierarchical differentiation – whereby 'Greek-European science' (interpreted as philosophical-theoretical knowledge) is rendered superior to 'Oriental practical attitude' (reduced to empirical-anthropological type) – Sufism represents a constellation of non-Western philosophers whose theoretical knowledge sets off a helpful 'travel to intellectual terrains outside of the ideal West'. Al-Ghazālī defies the 'theory of causation' which asserts that a thing, allegedly carrying a fixed nature, causes another thing to occur: in so doing, Al-Ghazālī weakens the scholars' legitimacy to achieve true knowledge. Likewise, Ibn al-Arabī not only explains how true knowledge is impossible in a cosmos where things are not fixed in a single state and unrepeatability is the rule but also asks a very crucial question: what, then, is the function of repetitive knowledge? In an attempt to answer this question, Ibn al-Arabī rebuffs the notion of power as something owned by the ruler/s; he, rather, conceptualizes power as something that originates from the 'relations' between the ruler/s, intermediaries (scholars/jurists), and people (subjects/citizens). From this alternative standpoint, the function of knowledge is to preserve status-quoist centres of power and to manufacture governed people. Strikingly, Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabī's Sufi ideas (chronologically conceived prior to the Western dominance in social sciences) come across as a covariant of Foucauldian and Derridean critical/post-structuralist thinking. However, it must be admitted that Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabī's ideas, unlike Foucauldian and Derridean critical/post-structuralist thinking, do not begin or end up with the notion of 'regime of truth' or 'deconstruction of truth': rather, these Sufi views are based upon an approval of a cosmos that variably contains plural apparent truths as expressions of a single Divine Presence/*Allah*, or say, one hidden truth (for more details, see chapter 2).

This idea of cosmos (that variably contains plural apparent truths as expressions of one hidden truth) is further advanced by Rūmī. In Rūmī's poetry, this idea of cosmos brings forth the core Sufi threefold attribute: namely, epistemological monism, ontological immaterialism, and methodological eclecticism. And this Sufi threefold attribute supplies raw materials for building a non-derivative and non-exceptionalist Global IR theory. Against

the epistemological dualism of Eurocentric IR that supports a knowledge-situation driven by rigid subject-object distinction, the Sufi 'epistemological monism' permits a potential subject-object merger: for Rūmī, the unknown secret of the object (other) becomes known if the subject (self) gets rid of its separated being and merges with the object/other, thereby sensing a level of consciousness marked by *waḥdat al-wujūd* ('oneness of reality'). Contrary to the ontological priority in Eurocentric IR wherein the 'science of being' is the starting point for knowledge production, Sufism endorses 'ontological immaterialism' wherein the non-being is the originating point of being: Rūmī derives inspiration from the principle of *wahdat al-shuhud* ('oppositional-existence') in order to suggest that being/*hast* originates from non-being/*nist*, just like visible many-ness originates from invisible oneness, and war originates from peace. Also, in contrast to the compartmentalized methodology for knowledge production in Eurocentric IR (that employs either 'rationalist subject-object-correspondence' or 'reflectivist intersubjectivity'), the Sufi 'methodological eclecticism' amalgamates rationalist, reflectivist, and even extra-rationalist ways to seize reality: Rūmī's methodological options involve abrogating the mind, activating the deep sensitivities of heart, recognizing the limits of language, sinking into silence, and at last losing one's self and dissolving it in the other/s (for a comprehensive analysis, see chapter 3).

Most certainly, Sufism enfolds a plethora of ideas that do not simply function as a linguistic duplication of the established conceptual inventory of Eurocentric IR. Rather, these ideas open up entries into the conceptual exteriors of Eurocentric IR. And these ideas (that open up entries into the conceptual exteriors of Eurocentric IR) flow from both cultural specificities and economic settings of non-Western parts of the globe. The historical execution of Sufism in Syria, Turkey, and Sudan testify this statement. The Sufi idea of *waḥdat al-wujūd* ('oneness of reality') – which finds parallels in Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Kabbalah within Judaism, and Christian mysticism – pleads to dilute temporal 'I-ness' and bridge identitarian gaps amidst human beings without eliminating their mutual diversity (see chapter 4). In line with this Sufi idea, the post-insurgency Syrian politics (1980s–1990s) – under the leadership of Grand Mufti Kaftaru – organized some exceptional interfaith and intersect dialogues among diehard antagonistic camps, thereby surpassing stiff mental barriers that block the weakening of religious/sectarian identities in (inter)national politics. The factors that enabled the weakening of religious/sectarian identities were not limited to the domain of 'cultural' but also extended to the domain of 'economic': it is widely held that the biased economic measures of the Syrian Ba'th regime provoked violent political resistance from the Salafi jihadists and critical dialogic responses from the Sufis. Broadly speaking, the case of post-insurgency Syria shows how Sufi

praxis disproves the naive bifurcation of global politics into cultural and economic domains (for a complete review, see chapter 5).

It is true that the Sufi idea of *waḥdat al-wujūd* ('oneness of reality') – regardless of its stress on potential subject-object merger – runs the risk of reinforcing an Islamo-centric dualism between subjective-human inspiration and objective-divine revelation (see chapter 6). But even in the case of present Turkey, where the Sufi communities of Menzil and Ismailağa (in)voluntarily activate this Islamo-centric dualism via strict implementation of various Sufi rituals/dress codes, thereby hierarchizing the socio-political atmosphere and solidifying (not melting down) the dogmatic religious/sectarian identities, the impact of Sufi politics is felt in both cultural and economic domains. Reportedly, during the economic crises of the 1990s, the Sufi communities of Menzil and Ismailağa struggled to prevent their followers from running away on the wheels of neoliberal market mechanism: in order to do so, these Sufi communities started their own 'solidarity economic practices' which assisted the followers in repaying debts and making new investments. During the post-crises period, these solidarity economic practices have further intensified. At present, Menzil followers are not only closely allied with the Turkish Ministry of Health and Ministry of Interior Bureaucracies but also have their own 'All Industrialists and Businessmen's Association' called TUMSIAD. Although Ismailağa followers do not enjoy an analogous presence in the state bureaucracy, they have a vast network of associations run by small-scale merchants and investors who operate at national as well as international levels (for an in-depth survey, see chapter 7).

Evidently, the philosophical-textual dimension of Sufism does not operate in a vacuum: there is always a historical-contextual facet linked to it. Many a time, when a Sufi tradition moves from one historical context to another, it tends to assign new meanings to its long-established philosophical texts. As per the Sudanese Sufi writer and politician Taha, when the Prophet migrated from Mecca to Medina, his shift from one historical context to another resulted in a change in the reading of Islamic philosophical texts – the change from 'Meccan Qur'an' to 'Medinan Qur'an'. Taha became extremely critical of those Sufi historical practices that, after the Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medina, enforced obligatory obeisance to orthodox leaders and displayed staunch opposition to change. Still, Taha retained his commitment to those Sufi philosophical texts that comprised universal ethical values, such as social altruism, solidarity, compassion, and humanism (see chapter 8). Taha's revolutionary analytical methodology – that tempers particular historical certainty with universal philosophical attributes – stands to strengthen the Sufi theoretical-practical intervention in today's global politics. Basically, when one tempers particular historical certainty with universal philosophical attributes, one makes sense of not only how Sufism gets integrated into different

local cultures but also how different local cultures get infused into Sufism: in effect, Sufism pursues a two-way track when it gets integrated into and infused with the literary-social-political cultures of the United States (see chapter 9) and Europe (see chapter 10). A cautious extension of Eurocentric IR in the direction of Sufi universal philosophical attributes can stimulate a Global IR theory for studying global politics in the challenging twenty-first century.

WEAVING THE FABRIC

So, how could Sufi's universal philosophical attributes function as interconnected threads in the propositional fabric of a Global IR theory? Sufi universal philosophical attributes – that stem from epistemological monism, ontological immaterialism, and methodological eclecticism – convey the following principles with regard to the nature of global politics:

i. The oneness of the world as a political entity remains a hidden reality.

Let us begin by raising a fundamental question – Do human beings inhabit one world or many worlds? In IR, a stereotypical response to this question is likely to oscillate between two poles: (1) 'one world with many theories'; (2) 'many worlds with many theories'. A few scholars assume that human beings live in one world – that is, 'the one world of globalizing capitalism, of global security dynamics, of a global political system that, for many, revolves around a single hegemonic power, of global institutions and global governance, and of the drive to develop and embed a global cosmopolitan ethic' (Hurrel, 2007: 127). Of course, this one world can be known through many epistemological, ontological, and methodological routes: these routes become accessible to human beings because they are differently positioned in the 'multi-regional-system' or 'multi-level-analysis' of global politics (Gebhard, 2016). Thus, this one world encompasses many theories – mainly, it is the liberal, realist, and constructivist IR theories that inform public discourse and policy analysis (Walt, 1998). By contrast, other scholars abolish the notion of one world and call for an openness to many worlds: the wide-ranging struggles for 'a just world peace' try to represent the voices arising from many worlds (Walker, 1988), particularly the voices of indigenous people who are relegated to the realm of myths, legends, and beliefs (Querejazu, 2016). The incorporation of these voices in global politics leads to the process of 'worlding', that is, the making of many worlds (or a pluriverse) (Tickner and Wæver 2009; Tickner and Blaney 2013). In sum, the making of one world or many worlds generates many theories, or say, many 'rival theories' (Snyder, 2009). Although these rival theories (that contest the notions of one world or many worlds) are

necessary for an orderly examination of worldly reality, they can practically thwart the progress of global politics. InoueI and Tickner (2016: 2) warn:

> 'Worlding' entails not only processes by which the world is made intelligible and by which 'we' determine who we are in relation to 'others', within and beyond fields of study, but also, how such sense-making exercises – that are always socially situated and power saturated – actually constitute the worlds that we inhabit. . . . While pluralizing the International Relations discipline is highly desirable, a few dilemmas emerge, such as how to avoid falling into spiral of epistemological relativism, how to construct a hybrid space between uniformity and difference, how to encourage diversity along with some sense of unity or community, and how perhaps to create a middle path.

Against the backdrop of these persisting dilemmas, Sufism emerges as a viable philosophical choice. The prevailing IR discourses allege that the truth of one world always hides the truths of many worlds (Querejazu, 2016): notably, a fixed wall of separation is built between 'one world' (dominated by the West) and 'many worlds' (embodied by the non-West). Conversely, Sufism insists that there are many worlds in one world (Khan, 1963), and the hidden truth of one world lies behind the apparent truths of many worlds (El-Aswad, 2012): as such, the uniformity/unity of one world always coexists with the difference/diversity of many worlds; one simultaneously lives in 'one/many worlds' (*al-wâhid al-kathîr*). Markedly, the connotations of one world and many worlds differ in Sufism. Instead of doing a mind-based inquiry that characterizes Eurocentric IR[2] (and also non-Eurocentric postcolonial/decolonial IR), Sufism initiates a mind-intelligence-heart-based investigation which relates different connotations of one world and many worlds to different planes of human consciousness. Hanif (2002: 308–309) explains:

> [Al-]Ghazali [says that] *Mulk* is the [apparent] world of sense perception and *Malakut* is the invisible world . . . [and the world of] *Jabarut* is the unity of *Mulk* and *Malakut* within man[/human consciousness] . . . the brain pertains to the realm of *Mulk*, the heart pertains to the realm of *Malakut*, and intelligence pertains to the realm of *Jabarut* . . . know that my brain [mind/*damagh*] will not understand the discourses of my heart if my intelligence (*'aql*) were not between the two . . . [the *Jabaruti*] intelligence is the interpreter that understands both the tongue of the *Malakuti* heart and also the tongue of the *Mulki* brain . . . [it] resembles a ship between the beach and the water; it has neither the utter fluxity of the water nor the utter stability and fixedness of the beach. Everyone who walks on the earth walks in the world of *Mulk* and of sensual apperception. And when [s/]he has sufficient power to sail on a ship, [s/]he is as one who walks on the world of *Jaburat*. And when [she or] he has reached such a stage that [she or] he can walk on the water without a ship, [she or] he walks in the *Malakut* [i.e. invisible world] without sinking.

As conformist IR discourses are primarily preoccupied with mind-based inquiry of many apparent worlds (*Mulk*), they more or less ignore heart-based sensation of one invisible world (*Malakut*). In so doing, they insufficiently mobilize the faculty of intelligence (*Jabarut*) that mediates between the two kinds of worlds: many apparent worlds and one invisible world. By contrast, the Sufi Global IR theory acknowledges the existence of two kinds of worlds: mental perception of many apparent worlds (West, non-West, etc.), and emotional awareness of one invisible world (single hidden connectedness of the globe). As Eurocentric IR now recognizes the role of emotions in expressing 'plurality of ontological positions' or many worlds (Carwford, 2000; Hutchison and Bleiker, 2014; Ross, 2014), the Sufi Global IR theory goes further to stipulate a *Jabaruti* (intelligence-based) and *Malakuti* (heart-based) mediation (read negotiation) between many worlds, even if the oneness of the world as a political entity remains a hidden reality.

ii. The political non-experience of the hidden reality of 'one world' gives birth to the oppositional political experience of the apparent reality of 'many worlds'.

Now, let us ask a related question – If human beings inhabit many worlds located within one world, then why do they prefer to plan their political actions in accordance with the fragmented model of many worlds and not united model of one world? Since the term 'inter' as a prefix instantly denotes a reality at crossroads, and a reality at crossroads automatically postulates 'dualities', the study of reality at crossroads in 'inter'-national relations (read IR) inevitably presupposes dualities among all sorts of material and ideational inputs that probably go into the making of various theories and practices of global politics (Shahi, 2018). Even if this dualist 'inter'-type of IR (Lapid, 1996) emphasizes that human beings (as diverse sources of material and ideational inputs to global politics) are not alike (or non-dual), it does not mean that they live in separate worlds (Hellmann, 2017). If human beings do not live in separate worlds, then they do live in connected worlds. Yet when it comes to the practice of IR – for instance, formation, implementation, or opposition of 'foreign policies' – various state and non-state actors plan their political actions on the basis of supposed separation between many worlds (even if these many worlds remain subsumed in one world). Christopher Hill (2002: 6–7) clarifies:

> In an age which stresses the importance of our common humanity many of us want to play down the idea of *difference* [between many worlds], especially where it is based on statehood or nationality. But even if we were to displace terms like 'foreign policy' and 'foreigner' – and political correctness has moved in that direction – we should simply have to find new labels for the same reality, just as

> . . . the EU has 'external' [not 'foreign'] economic relations. If we acknowledge that boundaries can be fuzzy, that interdependence is extensive and that ethics should be a single realm, there is still a break-point between those who are inside any given community and those who are without, between those you are legally responsible for and those you are not . . . While most activity has an international dimension, there are still some things – the firefighters' strike for instance – which are mainly 'our' [or 'self'] business, and others, like the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which are mostly 'other' people's business . . . the differences between 'inside' and 'outside' usually count, in terms of the responsibilities we have, the resources we are able to deploy and the influence we may exert.

In IR, the idea of one world (dominated by the West) is resisted by the protesters who articulate the marginalized voices of many worlds (embodied by the non-West). Yet these protesters are themselves affiliated to competing schools, which in turn, reinstall the reactionary boundaries between 'inside' and 'outside'. This stands true in the context of appropriation of Islam in IR: observably, the appropriation of Islam in IR reveals the general problem of difference and Islam's assumed resistance to any easy assimilation into a universalized modernity sponsored by the West (Davutoğlu, 1994). Mustapha Kamal Pasha (2017: 110–111) elaborates:

> The familiar strategy to subsume historical and living forms of otherness as the pre-history of modernity (Fabian, 1983) is readily subverted in the face of Islam's nagging presence, neither inside nor outside modernity. The alternative strategy to annihilate the radical otherness of Islam produces a vicious cycle (Benhabib, 2002). It reproduces the conditions for Islam's insistence on difference, and especially on an occidental reading, an incommensurable difference (Euben, 1999). The quest for reconciliation of one/many worlds, or universality/particularity (Walker, 1988) seems increasingly feeble. Neither assimilation nor annihilation promises a resolution.

At present, one of the central challenges of global politics is the need to create an 'inter'-national system which makes it possible for state/non-state actors to safeguard their dualist difference, and at the same time allows them to put forward a monist way of negotiating their dualist difference. The philosophical spirit of Sufism exactly offers this opportunity: since neither assimilation nor annihilation of the West/non-West promises a resolution, Sufism allows assimilation as well as annihilation of both the West and the non-West. In other words, Sufism follows Ibn al-Arabī's scheme to propose that the West is to be seen as 'West/not West', and the non-West is to be seen as 'non-West/not non-West'. William C. Chittick (2010: 7) simplifies:

> For Ibn al-'Arabi, Being is in no sense ambiguous or questionable, though our understanding of Being is something else again. Being is that which truly is, while everything else dwells in fog and haziness. Hence, when we say that

> something [e.g. 'West' or 'non-West'] 'exists', we have to hesitate a little in saying so. The statement is ambiguous, for just as a thing pertains to existence, so also it lies in the grasp of existence's opposite, nonexistence (*'adam*). Every existent thing is at one and the same time He (Being) and not He (not Being, absolute nothingness) [i.e. Being/not Being].

This Sufi tenet of 'creatio ex nihilo' – whereby every existent thing is at once Being/not Being – disclose that any statement about the existence of 'West' or 'non-West' is ambiguous. Just as the 'West' or 'non-West' pertains to existence, so also it lies in the grasp of existence's opposite: thus, the existence of 'West' lies in the grasp of existence's opposite, that is, 'non-West'; and the existence of 'non-West' lies in the grasp of existence's opposite, that is, 'West'. Therefore, the Sufi Global IR theory considers rigid 'West–non-West difference' (or 'self-other difference') as an obstacle to a sober ethic of international responsibility. As per Sufi Global IR theory, the realm of 'inter'-national is a mixture of apparent many worlds (containing self-other difference) and invisible one world (comprising single hidden connectedness). Since it is possible for human consciousness to reconcile visible many worlds with invisible one world, in the Sufi realm of 'inter'-national, war on the 'other' is to be seen as war on the 'self', and peace with the 'other' is to be seen as peace with the 'self'.

iii. In IR, the apparent reality of many worlds – as separated from the hidden reality of one world – is nonetheless a naturalized political experience of pain. The seemingly differential politico-experiential realities of many worlds flowing from various selectively identified constituents (namely, individual, state, class, community, culture, civilization, etc.) are more often than not evoked as 'rational grounds' for painfully politicizing a variety of gaps, rivalries, frictions, conflicts, and wars.

Another related question is this – How does apparent reality of many worlds become a naturalized political experience of 'pain'? The emotion of pain is relatively underexplored in Eurocentric IR. Nonetheless, in the past ten to twenty years, Eurocentric IR has begun to take emotions seriously (Hutchison, 2018). A few scholars have confessed that emotions generally permeate global politics in complex ways and also, once taken seriously, challenge many entrenched assumptions of IR scholarship, such as the assumptions related to 'representation' (Hutchison and Bleiker, 2014). Since representation is about linking individual and collective emotions, emotions are a huge part of how human beings present, constitute, legitimize, and enact their differential politico-experiential realities (Zehfuss, 2007; Fierke, 2013; Koschut et al., 2017). Categorically, the emotion of pain operates as a catalyst in the making and unmaking of different worlds (Scarry, 1985). For instance, the

painful politico-experiential realities of the victims of the Holocaust, the genocides of the late twentieth century, and the terrorist attacks of the early twenty-first century are used to make the meanings of goodness/evilness in 'one world' (dominated by the West) (Jeffery, 2007). And the painful politico-experiential realities of the colonized natives or human rights victims are used to make the meanings of goodness/evilness in postcolonial world, a site of 'many worlds' (embodied by the non-West) (Orford, 2003). Despite the fact that the terms 'pain' and 'suffering' are often used interchangeably, one can distinguish between these two emotions. Jeffery (2007: 24) elucidates:

> Although the intensification of pain beyond an individual's 'pain threshold' and the inability to disengage from painful experience can both be conceived as the causes of suffering, suffering may be more accurately equated with meaningless or incomprehensible pain. As Erich Loewy writes: 'Pain can become suffering if it is seen to serve no purpose and, in that sense, to have no meaning'. Thus pain, willingly endured for a greater purpose, for example, that caused by cosmetic surgery, body-piercing, or tattooing, is not commonly viewed as suffering. Pain that is beyond that which we can endure or that serves no purpose, but from which we have no means of escape, is meaningless for the person experiencing it. It is the essence of suffering.

In IR, the differential politico-experiential realities of one world and many worlds speak more about the instances of pain, and less about the instances of suffering. It is so, because the pain arising from the differential politico-experiential realities of one world and many worlds is neither always beyond endurance nor fully without purpose; rather, this pain is sometimes willingly endured to serve premeditated purpose. Sungju Park-Kang (2014: 59–60) informs:

> Pain is not necessarily about something negative; it can be a resource for different, reflective or possibly better politics. [Judith] Butler (2004: 149–150) suggests that ['"pain", which is sometimes also referred to as] "suffering", can yield an experience of humility, of vulnerability, of impressionability and dependence, and these can become resources if we do not "resolve" them too quickly'. One could transform pain into a particular opportunity. . . . To a certain extent, that opportunity also brings my attention to the politics of mourning . . . one mourns when one accepts that by the loss one undergoes, one will be changed, possibly forever. Perhaps, mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation . . . the full result of which one cannot know in advance. In short, Butler proposes that we need to take pain and mourning as space for another way of politics.

Perceptibly, the emotion of pain is a useful political resource if it does not resolve the related experience of humility, vulnerability, impressionability,

and dependence 'too quickly'. In fact, the pain-experience gives use to the effects it does because it continues to hurt (O'Sullivan and Schroer, 2012); this hurt must not die down. But then, in global politics, this pain-experience (that does not die down) also permits Western and non-Western participants to revitalize their respective narratives on agency, power, causation, blame, and responsibility (Halpern, 2002): perhaps, the pain-experience becomes functional in political communication as 'we can mimic pain' (Polat, 2012: 100). Not surprisingly, one finds narratives on the 'pains of rising powers' like China (Tao, 2019), and also counter-narratives on the 'cry of pain' of key powers like the United States (Stephens, 2019). In practice, this sort of pain-experience fuels blame game and maintains an unbridgeable distance between the Western and non-Western participants of global politics.[3] Against the political use of this type of pain-experience (that maintains an unbridgeable distance between the Western and non-Western participants of global politics), Sufism suggests an alternative way forward: Sufism does not favour deliberate strategic maintenance of prolonged pain; it, rather, persuades to go through pain only because the cure for pain is in the pain. For Sufism, if the pain-experience can set the worlds apart, then it is the same pain-experience that can draw the worlds together. Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee (1995: 15) explains:

> One paradox of the [Sufi] path is that although suffering does not take us ['self'] to God [or 'other'], we cannot reach Him without suffering [or pain] . . . [the painful] longing draws us closer. . . . This progression from separation (*bu'd*) to nearness (*qurb*) is not linear, but a spiral path on which the wayfarer is constantly thrown between these opposites. . . . Sometimes we feel so close . . . then we are thrown into separation. . . . The[se] opposites become reconciled within the heart [not mind].

Sufism admits that pain is a 'given/constant' in this ephemeral world.[4] But human beings have the capacity to make pain a stumbling block or a stepping stone towards their perfection and growth (Qadri, 1984). By and large, the mind-based/reason-based inquiry in Eurocentric IR treats pain as a stepping stone only if it succeeds in maintaining a strategic distance between the West and the non-West. On the contrary, the mind-intelligence-heart-based investigation in Sufi Global IR theory accepts pain as a stepping stone only if it reconciles the paradoxical intuitions of distance and nearness between the West and the non-West within the emotional consciousness of heart (not the rational consciousness of mind). Recalling how heart reconciles paradoxical intuitions, Rūmī chants: 'Where there is pain, the cure will come, where the land is low, water will run. If you want the water of mercy, go, become low! Then drink mercy's wine. . . . Pain is an alchemy that renovates [both 'self'

and 'other'; 'West' and 'non-West']. . . . Beware, do not sigh coldly in your indifference! Seek pain! Seek pain, pain, pain!' (Chittick, 2017).

iv. A forthright acknowledgement of the limits of the 'rational grounds' of experiencing reality could imaginably create fresh political space for making an appeal to the 'emotional grounds' for forging equality, companionship, cooperation, negotiation, and peace in IR.

The next question that begs a convincing answer is this – How does an emotional investigation differ from a rational inquiry of worldly reality? This question is not new to Eurocentric IR. Initially, Eurocentric IR prohibited emotions as a legitimate ground for studying worldly reality: it did so because emotions were seen as a form of 'passion', 'unruly force', 'misperception', and even 'accident' that interfered with effective political reasoning (Jervis, 1976; Dixon 2003). However it eventually became clear that an emotion-free rationality is nothing but a 'chimera' (e.g. Elster 1999; Nussbaum 2001): not only socio-political realities constitute emotions (Lutz 1988), but also emotions constitute socio-political realities (Scheff 1990; Barbalet 2001). Thus, Eurocentric IR began to realize that better information about citizens' emotions and greater emotional literacy could improve policymaking in (inter)national politics (David et al., 2019). But then, despite the new-found 'emotional turn' in Eurocentric IR (Clément and Sangar, 2018), a few puzzles persist. For instance, the exact difference between the roles played by reason and emotion in knowing the realities of global politics remains unstated: while some scholars notice that moral-ethical judgement in global politics demands reason and emotion, not reason or emotion (Saunders, 2016), other scholars observe that emotion is an inescapable component of rationality itself (McDermott, 2014), and that reason and emotion are not nearly as mutually exclusive as assumed by prevailing approaches to global politics (Lebow, 2005). Although research has been done on how particular emotions are declared (il)legitimate or (un)desirable in global politics (Beattie et al., 2019), there is an absence of a clear-cut theory of emotions: what we have is a more open-ended sensibility that aims to trace the impact of emotions on global politics even where and when it is not instantly apparent (Bleiker and Hutchison, 2018). As such, the emotional turn is marked by a shared discontent over the lack of embodied/personified experience in IR;[5] but what this 'turn' precisely entails is far from clear (Rythoven and Sucharov, 2020).

So, how does the Sufi theory of emotions offer a more refined understanding of the realities of global politics? More often than not, the accustomed scholarly debates differentiate between Western and non-Western worlds while ascertaining the comparative roles of reason and emotion in capturing socio-political

realities. Describing how the 'universal construct' of emotions may have different meanings in different worlds, Murat K. Artiran (2019: 72) notes:

> When defining emotions, many psychologists are interested in the environmental and relationship aspects. . . . People feel free to express their feelings in Western culture, while in Eastern [or non-Western] cultures, people pay greater attention to group values and harmony when expressing their feelings. [For example], in Turkey, an individual is seen as a selfish and self-centred if he or she 'expresses themselves', and 'not expressing one's feelings' is 'respected' by society. In Western culture, high arousal emotions, such as excitement, anger, alarm, fear, happiness, gladness, and joy are appreciated. They are valued and promoted more than low arousal emotions, such as calm, depressive, relaxed, gloomy, and satisfied.

The categorization of emotions into Western and non-Western cultural boxes also splits up the general understanding of other dynamics of global politics: for instance, it is argued that, unlike non-Western methods, Western methods of conflict resolution separate emotion from reason (Arasteh, 2013). Nonetheless, Sufism abstains from a preconceived segregation of Western and non-Western emotional patterns of doing global politics. Arasteh (2013: 193) comments:

> [Sufism] may examine sources of social contradictions in both the East [non-West] and the West and resolve these conflicts in terms of man's ultimate destiny, that is, the development of healthy character and the establishment of peace. It is in [these] terms . . . that Rumi and his related oriental heritage can be of great benefit to present-day leaders. A new [Sufi] insight . . . can give such leaders a new norm to be used to evaluate Western societies and to arrive at the conclusion that the over-rational society of the West is a reaction to the previously dominant-submissive relationship of centuries ago.

Sufism not only raises objection against an over-rational attitude but also unambiguously spells out the necessary roles played by reason and emotion in uncovering reality. In so doing, Sufism affirms the superiority of heart-based knowledge (emotion) in comparison to mind-based knowledge (reason).[6] Martin Lings (1975: 48 and 53) illustrates:

> For what is indeed Sufism, subjectively speaking, if not 'heart-wakefulness'? . . . the Qur'anic perspective agrees with that of whole ancient world, both of East [non-West] and of West, in attributing vision to the heart [not eyes] and in using this word to indicate . . . what this corporeal centre gives access to, namely the centre of the soul, which itself is the gateway to a higher heart, namely Spirit. Thus 'heart'[i.e. world of *Malakut*] is often to be found as a synonym of 'intellect' [i.e. world of *Jabarut*], not in the sense in which

> this word is misused today but in the full sense of the Latin *intellectus*, that is, the faculty which perceives the transcendent . . . the heart may be said to transcend the rest of the body . . . the body as a whole is 'horizontal' in the sense that it is limited to its own plane of existence, the heart has, in addition, a certain 'verticality' for being the lower end of the vertical axis which passes from Divinity Itself through the centres of all the degrees of the Universe . . . representing each centre as separate and distinct from the others and yet at the same time connected with them. It is in the virtue of this interconnection, through which centres are as if it were merged into one . . . the harmony of the Universe depends on analogous sameness and differences between not only individuals but also worlds.

When it comes to comprehending the sameness and differences between individuals and/or worlds, the mind-based knowledge (reason) gets deeply trapped into earthly conditions, such as spatiality (e.g. here/there) and temporality (e.g. past/present). By contrast, the heart-based knowledge (emotion) escapes from these earthly conditions by virtue of its exaltation and is thus of all experiences the vastest and most enduring (Lings, 1975). It is in this sense that the Sufi mystic Kharraz (d. 899) tells how the combined roles of mind/reason and heart/emotion offer access to two types of experiential realities: (1) *baqā'* (subsistence within spatiality/temporality) and (2) *fanā'* (annihilation of spatiality/temporality) (Farhadi, 1996). The mind-based experiential realities of *baqā'* (subsistence within spatiality/temporality) record the phenomenal world in terms of plurality/differences. In addition, the heart-based experiential realities of *fanā'* (annihilation of spatiality/temporality) map the plurality/differences with reference to the noumenal world of singularity/sameness. In fact, *baqā'* and *fanā'* 'present an ontological oscillation between universalism and particularism; between undifferentiated oneness and specificity. Both are asserted, and neither can be negated' (Lamptey, 2014: 44). In concert, *baqā'* and *fanā'* – as the Sufi methodology of knowing socio-political realities – embrace the phenomenal plurality/differences but situates the origination of this phenomenal plurality/differences upon the presupposition of noumenal singularity/sameness, that is, Sufism considers the noumenal singular world – understood as 'nothingness' – as the source of the phenomenal plural world.

In IR, the very approval of the noumenal world as the source of the phenomenal world can grant distinct empirical inferences (Lebow, 2014). While the stress on apparent phenomenal plurality presumes the world as 'already fragmented' parts waiting to be interconnected, the emphasis on invisible noumenal singularity assumes the seemingly fragmented parts of phenomenal plurality as 'already interconnected'. The rational inquiry of already-fragmented phenomenal plurality follows Hegelian dialectics of 'two-ness': that is, a two-dimensional interaction between phenomenal

subject and phenomenal object. And the rational-emotional investigation of already-interconnected noumenal singularity (which gives birth to fragmented phenomenal plurality) pursues an alternative dialectics of 'three-ness' (Ling, 2017), that is, a three-dimensional interaction between phenomenal subject, phenomenal object, and noumenal singularity. Thus, in Sufi study of experiential realities, the presupposed noumenal singularity continuously remains in the background as a 'referential point' while recording the spatio-temporal character of the seemingly separated phenomenal subject and phenomenal object. Since this noumenal singularity is free from phenomenal spatio-temporal fragmentations, it is also free from the risks of choosing any 'centrisms' or 'central spatio-temporal locations' as preferred or restrictive vantage points for analysing phenomenal plurality.

Although Sufi Global IR theory embraces *baqā'*, that is, phenomenal plurality as a dualist experience of subject-object distinction (identical to Eurocentric IR), it revisits this phenomenal plurality as *fanā'*, that is, manifestation of presumed noumenal singularity that flows from a monist experience of subject-object merger.[7] This alternative knowledge of subject-object merger (or self-other merger) is called *dhawq* by Al-Ghazālī (i.e. the 'directness' of heart-based knowledge as opposed to mind-based knowledge) (Lings, 1975); *al-Khalq* by Ibn al-Arabī (i.e. the mirror world of created realities) (Awn, 1983), and *faraj* by Rūmī (i.e. the joy of openness) (Tourage, 2005). From the Sufi sensation of *dhawq*, *al-Khalq*, and *faraj*, the identity of the 'self' (West, non-West, etc.) is presumed to be already merged in that of the 'other/s'. Rūmī reveals: 'you' ('self') are a lover of your own experience, not of 'me' ('other/s'), but 'you' ('self') turn to 'me' ('other/s') to feel your own emotion (Artiran, 2019). Thus, when one engages with the process of unfolding the realities of 'self-other merger' or 'West–non-West merger', the knowledge about the self (e.g. West) implies knowledge about the other/s (e.g. non-West), and lack of knowledge about the other/s (e.g. non-West) implies lack of knowledge about the self (e.g. West). Logically, the Sufi Global IR theory – that makes a rational-emotional appeal to know the self through the other/s, and to know the other/s through the self – is far more promising in terms of its ability to cultivate equality, companionship, cooperation, negotiation, and peace in global politics.[8]

v. An overt admittance of the fragmentations inherent in plural dualist master-/meta-narratives of reality could stimulate the theoretical-practical agenda of revealing not only the hitherto overlooked material-ideational connections across many worlds but also the hitherto ignored monist master-/meta-narratives of one world in IR.

At this stage, it is pertinent to tackle one last question – Is a monist master-/meta-narrative a theoretical-practical advancement over a dualist master-/

meta-narrative of reality? At the outset, one must know that there are multiple Western and non-Western master-/meta-narratives based on monism and dualism.[9] While monism envisions the reality of one world, dualism envisages the existence of many worlds (Miller, 1947). Though, in Sufism, the idea of monism (one world) is not the polar opposite of the idea of dualism (many worlds): it is a fair unity of these two.[10] Henry Corbin (2014: 318) opines:

> Ibn [al-]Arabī rejects all perceptions of *wahdat-al-wujudiya* ['oneness of reality'] in this [apparent] world. To his mind, it is an absurdity to say that the servant, in a state of *fanā'*, has become God (*Haqq*), since 'becoming' (*sayrura*) postulates duality and duality excludes unity. Thus a philosophical postulate, an *a priori* datum of the intellect (*fitrat al-'aql*), and not a mystical experience or achievement (*dhawq Sufi)*, is the foundation of the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* ['oneness of reality']. If Ibn [al-]Arabī professes that being is one, it is not because this was revealed to him in a mystic state. This unity is a philosophical premise which requires no proof. Even if a man claims to have been united with God . . . the event he is relating is inevitably an event in duality. . . . But to be aware of the duality of the knower and known is one thing, to affirm and justify their dualism would be another. In other words, if there is any justification of speaking for monism here, it is in the sense of a philosophical monism formulating the transcendental condition of being, and only because this philosophical monism is precisely the necessary schema in which to meditate *unio mystica* and *unio sympathetica*, that is to say, the fundamentally dialogical situation. For the unity is always the unity of these two, it is not a third phase which absorbs dualitude.

Of course, in the apparent world of many-ness, the knower (e.g. subject/man/West) is more likely to be united with the (un)known (e.g. object/God/non-West) through a dialogical situation, not essentially via a third phase which absorbs dualitude. But then, the third phase, or the third dimension of noumenal singularity/oneness – referred to as 'three-ness' by Ling (2017) – is an integral part of what Corbin calls the 'transcendental condition of being'. The continuous presence of this transcendental condition of being in the background permits the knower (e.g. subject/man/West) to revisit the (un)known (e.g. object/God/non-West) not only in terms of its apparent 'outward forms' (*zāhir*) but also in terms of its hidden 'inward attributes' (*bātin*). Many a time, the knower revisits the (un)known through a scientific 'theory' (or 'philosophical premise' in Corbin's language). However, at times, the knower revisits the (un)known through a metaphysical 'asceticism' or 'direct knowledge': for Rūmī, theory is inferior to asceticism, and direct knowledge is superior to asceticism[11] (Arberry, 2004). But when one inspects the hidden inward attributes (*bātin*) of the apparent outward forms (*zāhir*) of different worlds (via theory, or asceticism, or direct knowledge), one finds

the hitherto overlooked sameness (or material-ideational overlaps) between them. According to Mostafa Vaziri (2015: 104–105):

> The non-dualism of Rumi professes sameness of all things in their true nature despite differences in their appearances. This also refers to the emergence of everything from one single source, which carries a fraction of that source in itself. . . . The difference in appearances on the one hand, and the mortal, corporeal system, on the other, have deluded humans into believing that they are disconnected from their immortal source of existence. . . . The human dualisms of body and spirit, male and female, [West and non-West etc.] . . . with thousands of faces are . . . blocking the sight of oneness in the background. . . . Dispersed thoughts also fly around as each mind preaches something different . . . . The irony is that pairs of opposites of all different things veil the world of oneness. . . . People are born in different lands and are called by different names [or outward forms] – Turk, Hindu, Roman and African – where in fact they are all of the same derivation [i.e. the same one single source lying at the core of their inner attributes].

In Sufi Global IR theory, the outward forms of many phenomenal worlds (rising from dualism) are harmonized, not annulled, with the inner attributes of one noumenal world (rising from monism): the net result of this is reconciliation of dualism with monism, or say, of many worlds with one world. If we review global politics from this position of reconciliation, the dilemmas of differences or sameness amidst one world and many worlds become a matter of 'human freewill' and not a matter of political compulsion. It is correct that some Sufi scholars are seldom criticized for neglecting human freewill – for instance, Al-Ghazālī is blamed for granting freewill to God and not to human beings (Druart, 2005). But then, how does one know if the source of what human beings consider as human freewill (or free expression of human disposition) is not a manifested God's freewill? Ibn al-Arabī asserts that all paths (good or bad) are 'true' as they lead to God (i.e. one single source), but it is human freewill (reflected as human tastes, affections, dislikes, etc.) that makes the goodness or badness of different paths an 'established' reality (*bi al-waḍ'*) (Smirnov, 2004). Rūmī further adds that the goodness or badness of seemingly opposite paths is in relation only to God and not to human beings; but it is human freewill which makes the decision to follow either God's ontological will or God's deontological will (Lamptey, 2014): while God's ontological will is manifested when human freewill goes on to inflame fragmentations of opposites, God's deontological will is manifested when human freewill goes on to awaken a unity of opposites. The Sufi Global IR theory – that focuses upon the importance of mind-intelligence-heart-based reconciliation between one world and many worlds – is definitely a call for a unity of opposites, including the opposites of West and non-West.

As the academic discipline of IR seeks to acquire a more 'Global' character by means of shedding its usual Eurocentric character, it earnestly sets out to invite extra theoretical-practical contributions from non-Western parts of the globe. In the vein of Sufism, there are several other non-Western knowledge-forms that mobilize monism to supply an alternative to the dualist theories of Eurocentric IR. For instance, it is held that the monist suspension of self-other dichotomy in Zhao Tingyang's theory of 'Tianxia (all-under-heaven)' is something that distinguishes Chinese IR from the dualism of Eurocentric IR (Wang, 2009). In the same way, it is argued that the monist philosophy of Nishida Kitaro, which influences Kyoto school's conceptualization of 'nothingness', could be extended to develop a Japanese alternative to the dualism of Eurocentric IR (Ong, 2004). And it is further proposed that the Indian monist philosophy of Advaita could not only resolve the theoretical-practical problems emanating from 'dualism-monism dichotomy' but also integrate Indian IR with Global IR (Shahi, 2018). In fact, the emphasis upon monist philosophical discourses in Chinese IR, Japanese IR, and Indian IR might create a misleading impression that the non-Western parts of the globe intend to push monism 'in opposition to' the dualism of Eurocentric IR. Nevertheless, the Sufi Global IR theory straightforwardly dismisses such misleading impressions. As an alternative to Eurocentric IR, the Sufi Global IR theory calls for a radical reconciliation of dualism with monism. In so doing, the Sufi Global IR theory insists that the 'dualism-monism debate' – which expects a reallocation of epistemological, ontological, and methodological hierarchies in IR knowledge-building – is not just a reflection of the geopolitical repositioning resulting from the rise of non-Western powers in global politics, such as China or India. It, rather, demonstrates the extent to which the reconciliation of dualism with monism could instigate a greater 'Global' spirit in practising contemporary global politics.

TRIMMING THE LOOSE ENDS

What, then, is the extent to which the reconciliation of dualism with monism in Sufi Global IR theory could instigate a greater 'Global' spirit in practicing contemporary global politics? The aforementioned principles of Sufi Global IR theory unveil that today's global politics is perturbed by the following major dualisms: (1) one world versus many worlds; (2) inside versus outside; (3) pain-receiver versus pain-giver; (4) reason versus emotion; and (5) science versus metaphysics. In practice, the dualism of 'one world vs. many worlds' makes the realities of global politics an upshot of a tug-of-war between two different geo-cultural groupings, the former dominated by the West and the latter embodied by the non-West. Instead, the Sufi Global IR

theory spreads the realities of global politics across a few interconnected levels of consciousness, that is, *Mulk* (the world of mind), *Malakut* (the world of heart), and *Jabarut* (the world of intelligence that interlocks *Mulk* and *Malakut*). As these levels of consciousness are unreservedly available to all human beings living in Western and/or non-Western parts of the globe, the differentiation of human beings (and their respective worlds) in terms of geocultural origin or location becomes relatively redundant. In principle, human beings living in both Western and non-Western parts of the globe can use different levels of consciousness to interpret reality in miscellaneous ways: thus, neither Western nor non-Western parts of the globe can claim an exclusivist Husserlian prerogative to produce either philosophical-theoretical or empirical-anthropological knowledge. If the literature of Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabī can be used to hone the post-structuralist theories of Foucault and Derrida, the writings of Foucault and Derrida can also be used to consolidate the Sufi theories of knowledge-power nexus developed by Al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Arabī.

But even if the universal human faculties of mind, intelligence, and heart are employed to understand the realities of global politics, the dualism of 'inside vs. outside' – which erects legal boundaries between domestic politics and international politics – remains intact. Therefore, despite the monist normative interest in enforcing domestic law and international law as parts of a single universal legal system, the predominant practice of global politics more often than not moves in the direction of dualism that separates domestic law ('inside') from international law ('outside').[12] While the Sufi Global IR theory does not force a way out of this predominant practice of global politics (that regularly separates domestic law from international law), it does provide an explanation of those anomalous moments when individuals/groups protest against the divisive logic of both domestic law and international law. In theory and practice of Sufism, domestic law and international law (or say, *Qur'an-hadith-sharī'a* structures) function as a universal codification of 'God's freewill' (i.e. one single source of reality). However, the possibility is left open that the interpretation of these structures could change in accordance with the knowledge of reality attained at different levels of consciousness.[13] Thus, when individuals/groups reach a specific level of consciousness whereby they come to see the reality of 'inside' as 'inside/not inside', and the reality of 'outside' as 'outside/not outside', they get motivated to protest against those legal ethical codes that divide the interconnected destiny of humankind along the realms of domestic politics and international politics.

Usually, the individuals/groups who have gone through some kind of pain-experience in domestic, international, or global politics begin to see themselves as holding the identity of a 'pain-receiver', thereby assigning the identity of a 'pain-giver' to the actual/alleged perpetrators of that pain-experience. As a

rule, the black victims of racialism see themselves as pain-receiver and white racialists as pain-giver; the women victims of patriarchy see themselves as pain-receiver and patriarch men as pain-giver; the Global South that has suffered from colonialism sees itself as pain-receiver and the colonizing Global North as pain-giver; the West that has suffered from terrorism sees itself as pain-receiver and the terrorism-sponsoring non-West as pain-giver. Notwithstanding the observable exceptions in these cases, the blame game – whereby an entire identitarian category of pain-receiver accuses an entire identitarian category of pain-giver for a particular pain-experience – continues to define global politics. Many more examples of such blame game can be recounted. But the main theoretical takeaway is this: while the dualism of 'pain-receiver vs. pain-giver' can keep up the fight for justice in international political life, it cannot facilitate the eventual release of victimhood (of pain-receiver) and guilt (of pain-giver). In due course, the absence of release of victimhood/guilt further adds to the already-existing emotional burden of pain-receiving/pain-giving. Sooner or later, the struggle to get out of this nagging pain-experience ends up in redirecting pain either outwards (towards the 'other') or inwards (towards the 'self'). Both the instances of redirecting pain (either outwards or inwards) can be said to be the acts of 'revenge' (perhaps, revenge, regardless of its perversion, hopes to provide at least a temporary sense of release of victimhood/guilt). The other-directed revenge is sadism, whereas the self-directed revenge is masochism. Needless to say, both sadism and masochism are consistently self-destructive and other-destructive, given the fact that the lives of 'self' and 'other' are essentially interconnected. What's more, the absence of release from victimhood/guilt carries forward self-destructive and other-destructive tendencies from one generation to another, even until the point where a particular generation has no individuals/groups who have been the immediate receivers/givers of a given pain-experience; yet these individuals/groups happen to inherit victimhood/guilt due to their political affiliation to the identitarian categories of pain-receiver/pain-giver. So, in spite of (or because of) the stress on history in understanding global politics, the history ironically never becomes history: the history, rather, keeps becoming the present! The history keeps becoming the present as a never-ending 'emotional-psychological loop'.

How does, then, the Sufi approach to pain suggest a way out of this emotional-psychological loop, thereby proposing a solution to the political problems arising from pain-experience? First, Sufism presumes that the emotion of pain is an integral part of the universal cosmic life, and, as components of this universal cosmic life, individuals/groups have to accept, endure, overcome, and go beyond a pain-experience as and when it comes; there is no space for denial of pain as pleasure (which means nothing in absence of pain) is not the sole or even preferred experience of human life or, by extension,

international political life. The pain-experience is much valued because it supplies uncharacteristic growth opportunities to both pain-receiver and pain-giver: it may persuade pain-receiver and pain-giver to cease to remain their previous inferior selves; it may persuade pain-receiver and pain-giver to try to become their potential superior selves. Second, Sufism supposes that, at a particular moment in time, it is not just the pain-receiver who is likely to bear the brunt of pain (victimhood), but it is also the pain-giver who is likely to bear the brunt of pain (as guilt); just like pain-receiving hurts, pain-giving hurts. In this scenario, the individuals/groups affiliated to the identitarian categories of pain-receiver and pain-giver need an emotional-psychological exit from hurt; whether this need is publicly articulated or not, the cause of justice in international political life is served only when an emotional-psychological exit from hurt is offered to both pain-receiver and pain-giver.[14] For it is this emotional-psychological exit from hurt that could forestall the transportation of victimhood and guilt from one generation to another, thereby pre-empting the repetitive backlashes of the same pain-experience. Third, Sufism supposes that the source of pain is firmly rooted in the cosmos (i.e. the nature of reality). Although the apparent pain-giver or the apparent pain-receiver is a momentary medium for expressing a given pain-experience, neither the initiative to give punishment to a pain-giver nor the initiative to give concession to a pain-receiver offers an assured emotional-psychological exit from the hurt of victimhood/guilt. The legal institutional mechanisms installed to deliver justice in international political life might decide to give punishment to a pain-giver, and concession to a pain-receiver. But a substantial break from the emotional-psychological loop of pain-receiving and pain-giving occurs only when one treats a given pain-experience as a transitory moment in the ever-flowing journey of life and death, thereby not freezing the identity of either 'self' or 'other' as a permanent pain-receiver or pain-giver. It is about constructing a conducive environment that allows both 'self' and 'other' to acquire new identities, including the identity of a 'perfect man' (*al-insan-al-kamil*) who grasps the pragmatic synthesis of pain-receiving and pain-giving.[15] Indeed, Sufism sees a latent 'perfect man' in every active pain-receiver/pain-giver: this perfect man is by all means larger than the narrow identity of that 'self'/'other' who happens to be a momentary medium for expressing a given pain-experience.

But how reasonable is it to think of providing relief (or emotional-psychological exit from hurt) to both pain-receiver and pain-giver, especially when it is obvious that the latter (i.e. pain-giver) is the legal-ethical wrongdoer and the former (i.e. pain-receiver) is not? And what happens on the occasions when the pain-receiver suffers from victimhood, but the pain-giver does not suffer from guilt, or vice versa? Is not reason more important than emotion for the purpose of institutionalizing justice in international political

life? And is not a rational-scientific study more reliable than an emotional-metaphysical study of global politics? The systematic inspection of these unexplored/underexplored issues can shape the agenda of new research. Nevertheless, the Sufi Global IR theory, that this study has attempted to flesh out thus far, upholds this standpoint – it is one thing to give punishment to an immediate pain-giver or concession to an immediate pain-receiver, but it is another thing to lastingly relate a historical instance of pain-receiving or pain-giving with the entire identitarian categories of pain-receiver or pain-giver. At a specific point in time, a pain-receiver/pain-giver may or may not feel the pain of victimhood/guilt, but the practitioners of justice (jurists) and the readers of history (scholars) must be wary of the political ramification of such possibilities in the long run. After all, if a terrorist illegally kills people by vice of irrationality-immorality, and if a jurist legally kills a terrorist (or passes a death sentence) by virtue of rationality-morality, and if both these acts of killings become a sort of chain reaction, or a never-ending emotional-psychological loop, then how does one ever measure the relative proximity of illegal irrationality-immorality and legal rationality-morality to the overall reality of killings on earth? History ought to be used to create a new history and not to repeat an old history. If the 'relations' between rulers, intermediaries (scholars/jurists), and people are founded with an intent to create a new history (not to repeat an old history), then one is far more likely to experience an international political life that does justice not only to the prevailing legal-ethical codes but also to the immense possibilities of human beings or 'human becomings'. It is true that the perplexities of human beings can be diagnosed with the help of a reason-based science. However, the promises of human becomings cannot be congregated without the help of an emotion-based metaphysics. In any case, why should human consciousness (or human freewill) stay academically trapped into separate rational and emotional cages if in lived-reality it is not? It is high time the social sciences (including IR) stopped extorting split rational and emotional personalities out of boundless human becomings. To all appearances, a genuine Global IR is a non-compartmentalized academic gaze which curiously awaits a disclosure that could let humankind be as scientifically metaphysically free as it already is!

NOTES

1. The twenty-first century has seen a recurrence of deadlocks in global governance institutions (e.g. World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, nuclear non-proliferation regimes, and climate change mitigation frameworks). The comparative decline of US hegemony has been accompanied by an increase in the non-Western participants at the high table of international negotiations. But the

non-Western participants (e.g. China, India, and Japan) complicate the decision-making process because they are motivated by divergent sets of cultural ideas. As per Narlikar (2017: 101), 'The reason why this realm of ideas is especially important at this point is that one of the most serious gaps in global governance derives from the following problem: while it is clear what the rising [non-Western] powers do not want from the system, there is much less clarity on what it is that the rising powers do want. . . . Tapping into [their] cultural roots may allow [the rising powers like] India to develop an answer'. Narlikar perceives plural non-Western cultural ideas as legitimizing devices within those existing global governance institutions that promote a singular economic principle, that is, neoliberalism. Though this assessment is true, it skips those instances where non-Western cultural ideas generate alternative (non-neoliberal) economic structures that work in tandem with the existing global governance institutions.

2. Eurocentric IR adopts a mind-centric approach to decode the worldly reality: while rationalist IR theories consider the world as located outside of human mind, reflectivist IR theories consider the world as located inside of human mind (Jackson, 2016).

3. For example, 'one of the effects of military intervention [in global politics] is to maintain a distance between the people one wishes to save and one's own community' (Orford, 2003: 125).

4. According to the Persian Sufi mystic Bayazid Bistami (1977: 141), 'True self-knowledge is the antidote to suffering, for somebody who knows that the oil in his lamp is limited, will not moan after its extinction. One who knows that the lamp which he has lit is not safe from wind will not scream when it is blown out'.

5. Rythoven and Sucharov (2020) distinguish between the conceptualizations of 'emotion' (as socially recognized embodied experiences, for example, joy, fear, anger), 'affect' (as unconscious embodied experiences, for example, moods, sentiments, attachments), and 'feeling' (as conscious embodied experiences).

6. It is upheld that reason has two rivals: love and stupidity (Soroush, 2000). While Sufism includes both 'rational mystics' and 'ecstatic mystics' (Bahram, 2011), Rūmī walks on the 'path beyond reason' (Soultani, 2017) and proclaims: 'If reasonable people do not feel the presence of love within the universe, that doesn't mean it's not there' (Iqbal et al., 2015: 109).

7. In this context, the Sufi Global IR theory raises some unanswered questions: If the realization of 'oneness of reality' demands a subdued temporal I-ness, then why do prevalent Eurocentric and non-Eurocentric postcolonial/de-colonial IR theories tirelessly reinforce rigid political identities? If Eurocentric and non-Eurocentric IR theories reinforce rigid political identities only to zealously safeguard plurality, then would not a vision of reality that safeguards plurality but foresees plurality as embedded in singularity/oneness ('one and many') be a step forward?

8. For a detailed study on how the Sufi thoughts of Rūmī can inspire an 'activist scholarship' that intends to bridge the gaps between theory and practice of local and global politics, see D'Souza (2014).

9. Some of the Western and non-Western philosophical traditions of monism are as follows: 'continuity-of-nature monism' in China (Cook, 2003); 'strict monism

of Advaita' in India (Schweitzer, 1952); 'harmonious monism' in Africa (Ijiomah, 2016); and pre-Socratic 'Eleatic monism' in Italy (Rea, 2001).

10. Butler (2012) associates Sufism with 'priority monism' which offers a level of existence through dependency to a multiplicity of objects but maintains that the multiplicity of objects is solely dependent on a single object, that is, one single source called the Divine Presence/God.

11. To clarify why Rūmī considers direct knowledge as superior to the knowledge obtained through asceticism or theory, Arberry (2004: 182) writes: 'To arrive [through direct knowledge] is better than to travel hopefully; the [wo]man who has arrived has transcended hope and fear'.

12. For a commentary on how monism and dualism form antitheses in the practice of domestic law and international law, see Laws (2000).

13. Referring to al-Hallaj's two-tiered ethical system exemplified in the science of opposites, Awn (1983: 250) states: 'What is good or evil [or ethically-legally right or wrong] is what God prescribes for the individual Sufi at a particular stage of his or her development [of consciousness]. No longer is the Lord (*rabb*)-servant (*'abd*) relationship the paradigm for the God-man relationship; it is the ever growing relationship of the lover (*'āshiq*)-Beloved (*ma'shūq*) that creates its own laws'. Likewise, mentioning al-Sarraj's attempt to combine jurisprudence and mysticism, Belhaj (2013: 96) writes: 'The Sufis agree with the traditionists and jurists in their beliefs, accept their sciences and consult them in difficult matters of religious law. Should there be differences of opinion, the Sufis always adopt the principle of following the strictest and most perfect course; they venerate the commandments of God and do not seek to evade them. Such is their practice in regard to the formal sciences handled by the traditionists and jurists, but having left these behind they rise to the heights of mystical devotion and ethical self-culture which are exclusively their own'.

14. Aarons (2016) asks: 'How can 'solidarity' be possible in and against the objective conditions that divide us?' In the context of the Afro-pessimist position, Aarons argues that it is the thought and practice of self-abolition (or annihilation of rigid temporal I-ness) that can hope to overcome the present anti-Black structure of humanity.

15. After analysing varying usage of the term in Islamic texts, Takeshita (1983) defines a 'perfect man (*al-insan-al-kamil*)' as someone who empathizes with the totality and synthesis that characterizes human existence. For Takeshita, a perfect man is not someone who limits the manifestation of God (i.e. one single source of reality) to one particular shape/name, for example, the shape/name of just a pain-receiver or just a pain-giver.

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