PART I

ISLAMISTS IN A WORLD ORDER UNDER WESTERN HEGEMONY

1

SETTING THE SCENE: HOW ISLAMISTS CAME TO BE KNOWN AS REJECTIONISTS AND ENEMIES OF WORLD ORDER

Until the end of the 'Cold War', social theorists across disciplines believed that religion would slowly but surely disappear and become irrelevant to political and social life. Secularisation was considered 'the only theory which was able to attain a truly paradigmatic status within the modern social sciences' (Casanova 1994, 17). As a corresponding normative claim, liberal and deliberative political theory in the Kantian tradition asserted that religion, on the one hand, and the state, politics and sometimes even the public, on the other, must be strictly separated from each other (Reder 2013, 63–6). In what seems like a rather drastic break with the empirical assessments of the secularisation paradigm seen in the 1990s, academics warned against 'the revenge of God' (Kepel 1993), 'the challenge of fundamentalism' (Tibi 1998) and the 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington 1993). And lastly, after the attacks of 9/11, what is often called 'Islamic terrorism' (Jackson 2007) went straight to the top of Western security agendas and, as a consequence, sparked new debates in the social sciences. In IR, for instance, the events of 9/11 triggered a critical reassessment of the structural secularism some believed to be prevalent in the discipline. These events had revealed that 'all mainstream theories of world politics . . . ignore the impact of religion, despite the fact that world-shaking political movements have so often been fueled by religious fervor' (Keohane 2002, 29). In political and social theory, too, there was analytical and normative re-evaluation, including the debate on 'postsecularism' which

revolved around Jürgen Habermas's (2001a, 2009) revised position on religion. A critical interdisciplinary strand of research, heavily influenced by Talal Asad (1993), pursued an important agenda of deconstruction. It questioned the binary distinction between the religious and the secular, and scrutinised the conditions and effects of the 'politics of secularism' as a power practice (E.S. Hurd 2007). Notably, this debate successfully revealed how the figure of the 'Islamist' was constructed as the Other in Western hegemonic discourse, serving the self-affirmation of an insecure, but idealised secular Self (Mavelli 2013, 163).

This chapter uses this deconstructive lens to trace how 'Islamists' (and sometimes even Islam as a whole) have come to replace communism as the spectre that haunts the liberal world in the Western mind (Gerges 1999, vii–viii, Camilleri 2012, 1029). Of course, scholarly debates now take a far more nuanced approach to analysing political Islam, its intellectual history and its different real-world manifestations. Marc Lynch (2017) identifies two basic postures on political Islam present in policy circles in Washington, DC, but also in academia. There are the 'splitters', who 'produce finely-grained, accurate assessments of the ideological, organizational, and tactical differences among groups which share broadly-defined ideological orientations'. However, among some politicians and academics with a focus on policy and security (see, for example, Ganor 2015), a very crude, almost caricatural image of the 'Islamist' threat prevails. These are the 'lumpers', who 'typically view "radical Islam" as a coherent whole . . . from the manifestly apparent armed groups and terrorists to the underlying ideological and material support networks and broadly-held public attitudes that create an amenable environment' (Lynch 2017). This more or less monolithic enemy image of 'radical Islam' started to grow after the Iranian Revolution of 1979, gained importance during the 1990s (the 'clash of civilisations' and 'religious civil wars'), consolidated into a generalised and ubiquitous enemy image in the 2000s (al-Qaʻida and 'new terrorism'), experienced a revival in the 2010s (ISIS and the 'caliphate') and has survived to this day, especially in conservative and far-right circles in the West.

From the lumpers' perspective,[1] 'Islamists' are portrayed as suspicious, not only because of their alleged proneness to violence and the 'special character' of their ostensibly 'religious terrorism' (Gunning and Jackson 2011, 371). They are also constructed as an anachronism, as a relic from pre-modern times

who stubbornly reject the principles of the Western world order as a legacy of the 'Westphalian synthesis' and the corresponding 'norms of authority' (Philpott 2002, 67, 76): the sovereign state as the only polity with authority, the proscription of intervention into the domestic affairs of other states and the consequent emergence of pluralism in international society, religious free-dom and the decline of religion's 'temporal prerogatives' (Philpott 2002, 75). Islamists are said to challenge the modern state-based order because they rely on divine sovereignty (Anderson 2009, 196, Mandaville 2013, 178–9). This renders democratic forms of rule and legitimacy impossible, for 'any "Islamist" politics . . . demands a theocratic state in which there can be no debate about right and wrong, or about appropriate social order, because its aim must be "to bring about the rule of God"' (Teti and Mura 2009, 102). In this read-ing, Islamists' normative aspirations have to be totalitarian (Lynch 2017) and 'must eventually produce a caliphate' (Mandaville 2021). They are inextrica-bly linked to the hereafter and do not provide room for concessions to the here and now – which makes it undesirable, indeed impossible, to negotiate with them (Nilsson and Svensson 2020, 391, Miller 2011).

Following the 'splitters', this book argues that the figure of the 'Islamist' must be deconstructed to investigate what kinds of relationship actually exist-ing actors that are labelled 'Islamist' have with a world order under Western hegemony. I argue that the legacies of the secularisation paradigm,[2] which con-sists of the analytical secularisation thesis and the normative secularism claim, can still be felt in the more problematic parts of political and public discourse on Islamists and underlie the construction of the latter as the enemy of a world order deemed liberal. The 'global war on terror' further contributed to con-solidating the image of an Islamist threat. Not only did it mean Muslims and Muslim communities came under a general suspicion of radicalism and poten-tial radicalisation, it also further widened the concept of Islamism to include an increased number of more or less political forms of Islam. The 'evilisation' (Sheikh 2014, 496–7) of first al-Qaʿida and then ISIS also inflated the fear of these 'monsters' (Pinfari 2019, Bapat 2019) among Western publics. Without a clear distinction from other actors, sometimes even deliberately conflating the two, this led to the notion that Islamists are violent rejectionists (Maher 2016) of the global order – even though this is only true for a very small minority of them, namely the Salafi jihadists. Despite this, with their sometimes dramatic

politics of rejection (Pfeifer and Günther 2021), Salafi jihadists have managed to hegemonise the imaginary of Islamism as being diametrically opposed to and violently fighting against the Western world order. But political Islam is a plural, modern discourse. So, while some Islamists may indeed reject parts of the world order as built and dominated by Western states, they may also recognise (and seek recognition within) this order (Geis, Clément and Pfeifer 2021) or choose to resist and transform it.

A World Order without Religion? Secularisation and Secularism in Social and Normative Theory

Some of the most important reflections on and basic distinctions in the study of religion stem from the very beginnings of sociology. Among the most influential Western thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth century are Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Thomas Luckmann and Peter L. Berger. These scholars all contributed, in different ways, to what came to be known as the secularisation thesis. This thesis predicts – and sometimes tacitly advocates – the decline or even disappearance of religious phenomena in modern societies. What the aforementioned authors understand as 'religion', however, varies. The search for a concept of religion (or the rejection of a transhistorically and transculturally valid definition; see Asad 1993, 17) is one of the driving forces for social theorising on religion and lies at the core of debates in sociology, political philosophy, anthropology, comparative politics, area studies and IR to this day.

One important distinction is between functionalist and substantive or essentialist understandings of religion (Pickel 2011). The former is associated with a Durkheimian tradition (Durkheim [1912] 1990), whereas Max Weber is considered a key thinker when it comes to essentialist conceptions of religion. Weber ([1920] 1972) was mainly concerned with the relationship between religion and economics. He assumes that confessions have certain characteristic elements that have specific effects on human, and especially economic, behaviour. Notably, the precursors of more elaborate sociological secularisation theories can already be found in Weber's work, too. He contends that one key driver of its eventual demise is paradoxically inherent in the history of religion (more specifically Protestantism) itself. By relocating the path to salvation to actively working in and on the world ('*aktiv asketische*

"Weltbearbeitung", Weber [1920] 1972, 263) and rejecting all magical means, Weber argues that Protestantism launched a process of internal rationalisation which coincided with the rise of rationalism in the empirical sciences. In so doing, it contributed to the disenchantment (*Entzauberung*) of the world (Weber [1920] 1972, 263) – a world in which religion itself became increasingly implausible and was relegated to the sphere of the irrational until it finally became the 'anti-rational super-personal power par excellence' (Weber [1920] 1972, 564, author's translation).

These theses about religion's self-defeat were further expanded into secularisation theory in the second half of the twentieth century. Following a Weberian tradition, P. L. Berger ([1967] 1990, 25) conceptualised religion as 'the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established'. What exactly is understood as sacred varies throughout history, but it is always something extraordinary compared to everyday routine practices, and it is the opposite of both the profane and chaos. Religion bestows 'an ultimately valid ontological status' on social institutions and locates them 'within a sacred and cosmic frame of reference' (P. L. Berger [1967] 1990, 33), thereby both legitimising order and concealing its constructedness. With the rise of modern political orders, however, the status of religion changed. First, the state no longer operated as an enforcement agency ensuring religious practice but rather adopted more of a laissez-faire position. Second, the state no longer acted as an arbiter in an increasingly heterogeneous field of competing religions. Third, religion became more and more of a private matter, a '"choice" or "preference" of the individual' (P. L. Berger [1967] 1990, 133). It no longer fulfilled the function of connecting cosmos and nomos. The political order now drew on other sources of legitimacy. Through processes of marketisation and bureaucratisation, religion lost even more of its mysteriousness and awe-inspiring nature. The wide variety of different religious traditions on offer also challenged the claims of the confessions to 'unchanging verity' (P. L. Berger [1967] 1990, 145). In the end, religion was reduced to moral and therapeutic functions and subjected to 'consumer controls' (P. L. Berger [1967] 1990, 148). It was thereby de-objectivated and no longer provides 'overarching symbols for the society at large' (P. L. Berger [1967] 1990, 154). This process of the privatisation, individualisation and subjectivisation of religion is what came to be known as secularisation.[3]

Until the 1990s, the secularisation thesis that was formulated in the second half of the twentieth century remained largely unquestioned, despite empirical evidence that should have cast doubt on it much earlier (Casanova 2012). One explanation for this may be that some of the core claims of secularisation – like the separation of religion from institutions and its relegation to the private sphere – were supported by normative theories of secularism. These hold that 'religion should be confined to the private sphere' (Shah 2012, 2). In particular, they stipulate that institutions must be secular and that the democratic state must be fundamentally neutral. Such claims build on a strict separation of the public and the private sphere, as found in liberal political theory (for more recent contributions, see, for example, Laborde 2017). Following John Rawls's line of argument, for instance, religions cannot be the basis for public deliberation because they demand the acceptance of one comprehensive belief system. Modern societies, however, are marked by a plurality of reasonable doctrines, which means that citizens do not all share one single conception of 'the good'. In the public sphere, members of a society should therefore provide reasons for political action that are intelligible and comprehensible to other citizens, irrespective of the comprehensive doctrine to which they adhere (Rawls 1993, 133–72, 212–54, 1997). Such an 'overlapping consensus of reasonable . . . comprehensive doctrines' (Rawls 1993, 144) can be supported by various theories of 'the good'. This liberal conception not only protects the public sphere from being captured by one all-encompassing belief system, it also protects religion by making sure that public reason 'does not trespass upon religious beliefs and injunctions insofar as these are consistent with essential constitutional liberties' (Rawls 1997, 803).

The relationship between religious language and the public sphere is also central for deliberative democratic theories. Jürgen Habermas is one of the major thinkers in this field but this is not the only reason to study him. His work on religion is remarkable because he significantly revised and adapted his position on its role in democratic societies. Originally, he had been sceptical about religion, which, he argued, undermined communicative action, as rather than allowing an intersubjective understanding to emerge from discourse, it predetermined the goals of that discourse instead (Reder 2013, 82). In his later works, however, Habermas recognises the moral role of religion in democratic societies and in the foundation of the liberal state (Habermas

2001a, 22–3). Religion bears significant semantic potential for a postsecular society. By providing a source of solidarity and motivational force for participation in public discourse, it can play a corrective role for the pathologies of modernity and a secularisation that is in danger of being 'derailed' ('*entgleisende Säkularisierung*', Habermas 2001a, 12). Habermas rejects the notion that citizens are capable and willing to separate political from religious values. He dismisses what he calls the 'Rawlsian *proviso*' (Habermas 2009, 129) as an excessive demand (*Zumutung*) made by religious citizens (Habermas 2009, 135) but still insists that rule must be neutral (*weltanschaulich neutrale Herrschaft*) and that the state give secular reasons (Habermas 2009, 136). He solves this problem by introducing a divide into the public sphere. In the 'wild' political, or informal public, religious arguments are allowed – and even desired for their semantic and truth potential (*Wahrheitsgehalte*) that help political life to flourish. The formal public sphere, however, must refrain from religious language. In order that state institutions (parliaments, courts, ministries, administrations) may both benefit from religion's specific qualities and remain neutral, Habermas introduces an institutional proviso of translation (*institutioneller Übersetzungsvorbehalt*): religious and secular citizens in the informal public sphere both have to invest in a reciprocal translation process. The former accept that their arguments have to be translated in order for them to access the formal public, while the latter open up for the truth potential of religion (Habermas 2009, 136–8). These citizens thus live in a postsecular society as envisioned by Habermas.

Religion's Violent Return to Social and Normative Theory and the Recalibration of the Secularisation Paradigm

It is no coincidence that Habermas began to rework his thoughts on religion in the early 2000s. In a speech given at the award ceremony for the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in 2001, he shared his first ideas on a postsecular society. This was not only a reaction to the attacks of 9/11. Rather, Habermas asserted that 'whoever wants to avoid a war of civilizations has to remember the unfinished [*unabgeschlossen*] dialectic of our own, Occidental secularisation' (Habermas 2001a, 11, author's translation). Indeed, the 1990s had seen an outright explosion of publications on the supposed proneness of religions to violence (Baumgart-Ochse 2010) with a surprisingly one-sided focus on intra- and

(potential) interstate wars (Huntington 1993), militancy (Kepel 1993) and fundamentalism (Tibi 1998). According to these primordialist accounts, religious convictions discretely affect world politics. They regularly create violent conflicts with unbelievers or believers of other denominations by establishing fixed images of an adversary or hostile Other that needs to be fought. While the more simplistic primordialist approaches to religious violence were quickly refuted on theoretical and empirical grounds (Senghaas 1998, Henderson and Tucker 2001, Sen 2006), other research projects were more thorough in their data collection and claims. One of the most extensive comparative studies, *The Fundamentalism Project (1987–1995)*, was published in five volumes by Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (1991–5). The project identified fundamentalist movements as groups with 'family resemblances' reacting to the marginalisation of religion and responding to the challenges imposed on them by the secular modern world. Despite the sophistication of the project, one of the investigators resentfully contended in retrospect that the project 'reinforced the perception that religion . . . was becoming a significant national-security problem . . . [and] the notion of a "clash of civilizations"' (Appleby 2011, 228). The zeitgeist of the 1990s was all-pervasive.

However, some of the foundations for a more (self-)critical debate which emerged in the 2000s were also laid in this period. For sociology and neighbouring disciplines had to come to terms with the fact that 'a whole body of literature . . . loosely labelled "secularization theory" [was] essentially mistaken', given that the world was 'as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever' (P. L. Berger 1999, 2). A couple of years before Berger's famous restatement, José Casanova (1994) had presented a book on the persistence of religion in the public sphere. At the time, as he disclosed later, he interpreted this 'as an antimodern, antisecular, or antidemocratic reaction' (Casanova 2012, 25) and therefore problematic. Later, Casanova would become an important critic of secularisation on a more fundamental level.

In this sense, Talal Asad (1983, 1993) and his works on the anthropology of religion can be considered ahead of their time. His critique essentially addresses the way in which sociology and anthropology hitherto constructed conceptions of and knowledge on religion. He is particularly interested in the power involved in these processes of knowledge production. In these theories, religion is conceptualised as a system of symbolic meanings and generic func-

tions. It thereby acquires a transhistorical and abstract character and is posited as universal – even though it has a Christian history and is deeply entrenched in social practices and power-knowledge formations which are specific to the European context (Asad 1993, 17). The validity of concepts of religion is always connected with particular traditions and historical developments, which is why Asad rejects any attempt to formulate a universal definition of religion. He sees the act of defining as a product of contingent discursive processes at a certain point in time and space (Asad 1993, 29). Asad's theory calls for analyses of the power involved in authoritatively defining religion and identifying its place in society. He became one of the reference authors, if not the central one, in a critical deconstructive strand of research on secularism in the 2000s and 2010s that will be introduced in the next section of this chapter.

More generally, what was perceived as 'religious resurgence'[4] (P. L. Berger 1999, 10) in the 1990s triggered a myriad of studies in the 2000s that revisited the secularisation paradigm from various disciplinary angles. In IR, the 9/11 attacks were read as a culmination point of religion's violent comeback and therefore as a 'challenge . . . to secularism in International Relations' (Philpott 2002). And yet, at first, mainstream publications and conferences in IR only tentatively considered religion (Kubálková 2009). Due to the dominance of positivism and rationalism, IR was not the most accommodating discipline when it came to the study of religion. What was described above as the 'Westphalian synthesis' (Philpott 2002) is deeply inscribed in IR's foundations and main theoretical strands, and 'the rejection of religion has become even stronger in IR than in most other disciplines' (Laustsen and Wæver 2000, 739).

In most realist approaches, if it is not considered entirely irrelevant, religion is either reduced to rhetoric that serves the legitimation of foreign policy (Barnett 2011, 94, Fox and Sandal 2010, 149–50) or relegated to the sphere of the irrational, 'almost always caus[ing] the state to act in ways that are counter to its national interests' (Barnett 2011, 93–4). Liberalists sometimes get caught up in a narrative of modernity which sees it as a 'linear process in which liberal formations such as capitalism, secularism, and democracy all progress together', sometimes even embracing a 'thoroughly secular ideology' and a self-understanding that is 'antithetical to religion' (Snyder 2011, 12, 17). With the rational, self-interested individual as the core analytical unit, liberalism is

an obvious champion of secularisation theory – even though its ability to take non-state and transnational actors into account gives it an advantage over realism (Haynes 2014, 63). Liberal approaches which absorbed some concepts from constructivism, such as identity and norms, were more prone to accommodating religion (Moravcsik 1997, 525). Jeffrey Haynes, one of the first IR scholars to carry out substantial work on religion (see, for example, Haynes 1998, 2001), applied a soft-power approach to transnational religious actors, highlighting their ability to influence international politics despite their lack of military and economic resources compared to a state (Haynes 2008). Finally, with an empirically oriented research agenda, Jonathan Fox and Shmuel Sandler proposed reworking IR theories, especially realism as 'the most influential theory in international relations scholarship' (Fox and Sandler 2004, 167), to systematically take religion into account.

But some authors in IR remained very sceptical about such endeavours. For instance, Vendulka Kubálková (2009, 28, 29) criticised approaches that maintained a commitment to a positivist research tradition while trying to integrate religion into existing key theories. She read them as attempts at 'forcing "irrational" religion into secular and positivist categories and treating it as a culture or identity', thereby embracing an instrumentalist view of religion and reducing it to religious institutions as 'elements of transnational civil society or expressions of general cultural tendencies'. Instead, she advocated a more fundamental inquiry into the 'foundational myths and assumptions on which the discipline has been built' (Kubálková 2009, 30). Important stimuli for this agenda came from critical security studies investigating the securitisation of religious referent objects (Laustsen and Wæver 2000), and approaches in the tradition of the English School (Thomas 2000, 2005). But first and foremost, IR took inspiration from the debates in other disciplines.

In peace and conflict studies, for example, authors sought to put forward alternatives to the primordialist view of religion as violence prone (Hasenclever and Rittberger 2000, Baumgart-Ochse 2016). Instrumentalists argued that religion was merely a frame applied to conflicts that were actually about modernisation or about socio-economic grievances (Senghaas 2002). Functionalists like Mark Juergensmeyer (2008) emphasised the functional equivalence of the nation-state and religion in providing an ideology of order, which creates rivalry between them. Consequently, the 'sacralisation of politi-

cal demands' occurred where the secular nation-state failed to fulfil its promises (Juergensmeyer 2008, 217). Religion emerged as a form of resistance to the nation-state, offering the 'language of ultimate order' and the interpretation of conflict as the 'drama of cosmic war' (Juergensmeyer 2008, 213, 214). Constructivists saw religion not as something external which is attached to the actual conflict after the event but rather as a cognitive and normative structure through which the social world could be interpreted in order to be intersubjectively meaningful. Religion 'provide[s] social actors with value-laden conceptions of the self and others' (Hasenclever and Rittberger 2000, 647) and it is constitutive of social action, including violence. Whether or not religion plays an escalating role in a conflict, then, depends on the behaviour of political elites who may (but do not have to) mobilise religious traditions for the legitimation of violence (Hasenclever and De Juan 2007). One important insight from this strand of research is that

> the impact of religious traditions on conflict behaviour is deeply ambiguous: they can make violence more likely, insofar as a reading of holy texts prevails that justifies armed combat . . . [but they can also] make violence less likely, insofar as a reading of holy texts prevails that delegitimises the use of violence in a given situation or even generally. (Hasenclever and Rittberger 2000, 650)

The 'ambivalence of the sacred' (Appleby 2000) with regard to violence implies room for agency and underlies pleas for interreligious and intercivilisational dialogue (Dallmayr 2002, Michael and Petito 2009).

During the 2000s, normative reassessments were made in both political theory and philosophy, beginning with Habermas's sketch of a postsecular society and soon followed by the works of Charles Taylor, who became his most important critical interlocutor in the debate on religion. Besides his genealogy *A Secular Age* (2007), Taylor also developed a normative critique of the obsession of (liberal) democratic theory with religion as its Other. He opposes '"subtraction stories" of modernity in general, and secularity in particular' which suggest that human beings slowly but surely 'liberated themselves from certain earlier, confining horizons, or illusions, or limitations of knowledge' (Taylor 2007, 22). By disaggregating what appears as a coherent story of secular liberation, he identifies three secularities, among which he highlights

the one which refers to the changing conditions of belief as the most striking. He argues that not only has religious belief lost its status as the default mode of accessing the world, but it has even become 'hard to believe in God in [many milieux of] the modern West' (Taylor 2007, 539).

Although, as in the Habermasian postsecular society, believers and non-believers live side by side in the secular age, Taylor is more interested in the hierarchy that is still established between them. An epistemic distinction is drawn between secular reason, as available to 'any honest, unconfused thinker', and religiously grounded arguments, which 'will always be dubious and in the end only convincing to people who have already accepted the dogmas in question' (Taylor 2011, 53). Secular reasons are *a priori* more convincing in the field of moral and political orders because they are deemed neutral. Religion, in contrast, is seen as irrational and potentially dangerous. '[R]eligiously informed thought is somehow less rational than purely "secular" reasoning. [This] attitude has a political ground (religion as threat), but also an epistemological one (religion as a faulty mode of reason)' (Taylor 2011, 51). According to Taylor, however, it is unclear why, in principle, secular reasons should be any more accessible than religious ones:

> If we take key statements of our contemporary political morality . . . I cannot see how the fact that we are desiring/enjoying/suffering beings, or the perception that we are rational agents, should be any surer basis . . . than the fact that we are made in the image of God. (Taylor 2011, 54)

According to Taylor, the debate on secularism should therefore be realigned. Overcoming its fixation on religion, it should ask for the fitting 'response of the democratic state to diversity' – which, for Taylor, refers to any viewpoint (Taylor 2011, 36). Habermas countered this claim by arguing that religion demands from its believers that they participate 'in cultic practices in which no Kantian or Utilitarian has to participate in order to make a good Kantian or Utilitarian argument' (Habermas and Taylor 2009). For Taylor, however, these non-religious epistemic universes also presuppose certain experiences and they may be as inaccessible as religious language. Therefore, secularism's claim to neutrality should not single out religious language as unsuitable for the formal public sphere. In Taylor's words, the state's self-articulation 'can't be in Benthamite language, it can't be simply in Kantian language, it can't be in

Christian language' (Habermas and Taylor 2009). The core normative question, then, was whether or not religion had to be treated differently from other belief systems, convictions or worldviews (see also Dworkin 2013).

Sociology reacted to the empirical challenge of the secularisation paradigm in two main ways. One group of scholars considered its rejection to be premature and worked to reformulate and refine the claims of secularisation theory. For instance, Steve Bruce (2002) disaggregated the secularisation thesis into several causal linkages which can individually be subjected to empirical investigation. In the end he insists that 'religion diminishes in social significance, becomes increasingly privatized, and loses personal salience' (Bruce 2002, 30) – at least in the form of Christian, church-based religious belief seen in Western states. In other contexts, however, specifically in ethnic civil wars or conditions of rapid social change, religion may not in fact disappear. Similarly, Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart (2011) linked the survival of religion in some but not in other places to varying levels of affluence and existential security.

The second group of scholars took their criticism further and came up with different results. Casanova (2007, 105), like Bruce, made the case that secularisation theory needs to be conceptually divided into subtheses. For

> what usually passes for a single theory of secularization [are actually] three separate propositions . . .: 1) secularization as a differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms, 2) secularization as a decline of religious beliefs and practices, and 3) secularization as a marginalization of religion to a privatized spheresphere. (Casanova 2006, 12)

With this disaggregation, Casanova found that only the first of these theses is sufficiently supported by empirical evidence to be defended as a core aspect of secularisation theory. But he pursued his differentiation agenda even further. He scrutinised public religion in different contexts and was able to show that the empirically observable processes of secularisation differ from one another with regard to their course and outcomes. There are multiple 'secularisms' and 'secularities' (Casanova 2009, Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt 2012) at work as public religion interacts in different ways with the state, politics and civil society. There is no single path leading to the secular age or, for that matter, modernity (Eisenstadt 2000b).

Casanova's work contributed to deconstructing the binary opposition between 'the secular' and 'the religious' and helped to sensitise the secularisation debate to the Western origins of its assumptions, warning, as others had done, against the universalisation of a particular experience. But as Casanova himself suggests, some ideological forms of secularism are firmly rooted in cognitive apparatuses and therefore hard to tackle, operating subtly as an 'epistemic knowledge regime that may be unreflexively held and phenomenologically assumed as the taken-for-granted normal structure of modern reality, as a modern *doxa* or as an "unthought"' (Casanova 2009, 151). He thereby formulates the suspicion that a deep-seated secularist bias may be present not only in everyday practice and discourse in Western societies but also in political and academic accounts of religion. Revealing and deconstructing this bias was the agenda of the research strand presented in the next section.

Deconstructing Secularism and the Muslim Other through Critical Theory

So far, this chapter has reconstructed the origins and main claims of the secularisation paradigm. It has also shown how what was perceived as 'religious resurgence' and 'religiously motivated violence' in the 1990s challenged the secular assumptions inherent in various disciplines. The adjustments made in the different disciplines ranged from a reformulation of secularisation theory to a normative reassessment of religion's role in society to theoretical adaptations which allowed religion to be accommodated. What many contributions to this dynamic debate had in common, however, was that they posited religion to be something which is *a priori* located and meant to be outside the realm of politics. One important strand of research addresses this tacit assumption and shows that the religious–secular distinction is inherent in a specific discourse which produces the political as a secular realm with religion on its outside. To the scholars participating in this debate, the divide between religion and politics is therefore not natural but a 'powerful political settlement' (E. S. Hurd 2012, 47). Rather than a normative political theory or ideological stance, secularism, then, is a 'power-knowledge regime . . . that shapes modes, forms, and practices of religiosity compatible with and instrumental to the reproduction of state sovereignty' (Mavelli 2014, 174). It is precisely this authority of the modern secular state to continually define religion, to

draw and redraw the line between religious and secular realms, to define and redefine the '"proper place of religion" in a secular society' (Asad 2006, 526) and to 'become involved in the regulation and management of religious life' (Mahmood 2015, 3) that comes under scrutiny in the debate on the 'politics of secularism' (E. S. Hurd 2007).[5]

This debate primarily took place in IR but owes its key insights to contributions from other disciplines, especially the works of anthropologist Talal Asad. It started by deconstructing binary oppositions which not only separate the religious and the secular but also establish the subordination of the former to the latter (Wilson 2012, 58). Such oppositions include '*belief* and *knowledge*, *reason* and *imagination*, *history* and *fiction*, *symbol* and *allegory*, *natural* and *supernatural*, *sacred* and *profane* . . . [and] pervade modern secular discourse, especially in its polemical mode' (Asad 2003, 23, original emphasis). One particularly important distinction juxtaposes the violence-prone nature of religion, especially Islam 'as peculiarly [violent] (undisciplined, arbitrary, singularly oppressive)' (Asad 2003, 10), with secularism's claim that it is concerned with reducing 'pain and suffering as such', which is actually about 'the pain and suffering that can be attributed to religious violence because that is pain the modern imaginary conceives of as gratuitous' (Asad 2003, 11). In this perspective, the Peace of Westphalia is part of a 'liberal mythology' (Thomas 2000, 819) according to which peace is the benefit of the privatisation of religion, the secularisation of politics and the rise of the modern state. At the same time, however, the 'myth of religious violence' not only has the capacity to help 'marginalize discourses and practices labeled religious' (Cavanaugh 2009, 225) but can also be used to legitimise resorting to the use of 'secular' force against religious actors, especially in the context of counterterrorism practices (Gunning and Jackson 2011). For, as William T. Cavanaugh (2009, 226) puts it, 'their irrational violence must be met with rational violence', which may include the use of military force and war.

It is no coincidence that the critical debate on the politics of secularism gained traction in the 2000s at a time when the US and its allies began waging the GWOT, framed as necessary counterviolence against the threat of 'Islamic terrorism'. However, the characterisation of secularism as a hegemonic discourse on and authoritative definition of the relationship between religion and politics is a more systematic intervention and should not be limited to the

empirical post-9/11 context. Elizabeth Shakman Hurd argues, for instance, that secularism can operate as a 'conceptual apparatus' (2007, 114) through which events are perceived in foreign policymaking. In Hurd's view, two variants of secular discourse inform practices in international politics and IR theorising to this day. The first discursive tradition, laicism, is a legacy of the Enlightenment and claims that religion has successfully been banished to the private sphere or has disappeared entirely. Judeo-Christian secularism, in contrast, sees 'the separation of church and religion [as] a Western achievement that emerged from adherence to common European religious and cultural traditions' (E. S. Hurd 2012, 42). Both traditions have a certain connection to Orientalism, as they were developed at least partially with the Muslim Other in mind. Today, the two versions of secularism construct political Islam as a refusal to accept the public–private divide and as a deviation from '"normal" politics' (E. S. Hurd 2007, 117):

> In laicism, political Islam appears as a superficial expression of more fundamental economic and political interests and an infringement of irrational forms of religion upon would-be secular public life in Muslim-majority societies . . . In Judeo-Christian secularism, political Islam appears as an undemocratic commingling of Islam and politics that stands in sharp distinction to the modern . . . separation of church and state (E. S. Hurd 2007, 118)

As this shows, the binary of the secular and the religious is also often linked to the 'divide between the West and the rest of the world' (Cavanaugh 2009, 205). The politics-of-secularism debate is therefore closely linked to postcolonial thought. It also clearly formulates its critique against the backdrop of the aforementioned obsession of Western secular discourse with Islam and especially 'Islamists' and 'political Islam'. Characteristic of the construction of this religious subject is that it has neither internal differentiations nor clear conceptual boundaries. Secular discourse 'equates the appearance of Islamic religion in political practice with fundamentalism and intolerance' (E. S. Hurd 2007, 118), thereby neglecting the dispute over how religion and politics should relate to each other within the discourse of political Islam (E. S. Hurd 2007, 128) and portraying 'Islamism' as a general threat to modernity.

The merit of the debate is in particular that first, it revealed the deeper roots of the Western production of Islam as its 'ultimate "Other"' (Mavelli and

Petito 2012, 932, Euben 1999, Asad 2009) in secular discourse. Second, it also provided the tools to deconstruct the enemy image of 'Islamism' which has become pervasive in political and public debate and some intellectual circles since George W. Bush declared the GWOT. At the same time, this strand of research as an 'emergent orthodoxy' (Mufti 2013, 7) in the study of secularism has been criticised in two main respects. The first is its tendency to create new essentialised images in the course of deconstructing others. This refers not only to the structural understanding of secularism, which depicts it as oddly unchangeable and free of agency. By adopting the West/non-West divide, authors in the field also run the risk of re-essentialising both sides of that divide 'in a manner that mirrors the narratives of orientalist scholarship' (Lord 2019, 688). The 'Muslim world' is portrayed, then, as being primarily inhabited by religious subjects (Enayat 2017, 92–3), which also disregards actually existing developments and advocates of secularisation in this geographical area (al-Azmeh 2020). In a 'jargon of authenticity' (Mufti 2013, 11), authors who criticise the flat imaginary of Islamism as a form of totalitarianism (Cavanaugh 2009, 222) or the idea of a 'responsibility of Islam as a religion and Arabs as a people for acts of terror' (Asad 2003, 3) may actually be guilty of undue reductions themselves. They take

> varieties of contemporary political Islam as representative of the (Sunni) Islamic 'tradition' as such . . . [and suggest] that as a spiritual, intellectual, and political culture, Islamism marks a 'return' of Islam, either uncontaminated by, or having shaken itself free of, the liberal thought and practice of the modern West. (Mufti 2013, 10)

In this way, agency is only accorded to those who systematically reject Western legacies such as secularism, while all others are somehow implicated in the logic of colonial domination and contemporary imperialism (Lord 2019, 688–9). What is more, Islamists are portrayed as untouched by modernity, 'even though their revivalist claims of religious authenticity are undeniable products of the very cultural logics they disavow and disown' (Mufti 2013, 12). Islamism and modernity are inextricably linked to each other.[6] But this trait of Islamism tends to be overlooked in the debate on the politics of secularism because authors target only secularism in their critical analysis, not (political) Islam (Enayat 2017, 93).[7] This second point of criticism contends that

one-sided deconstructions make it seem like, on the one hand, non-Western intellectual traditions do not have the potential to become hegemonic or seek domination over others. On the other hand, such traditions also tend to equate liberalism, of which secularism is a part, with the West. This implies that either other Western intellectual traditions, from 'forms of communitarianism and conservatism . . . to forms of radical thinking and practice', are defined out of existence – or that liberalism 'is being utilized to indicate the culture and politics of the modern West as such, [but then] it can hardly be conceived of as a unitary intellectual system' (Mufti 2013, 13).

One does not have to agree with all the readings of and criticism levelled at key contributors to the deconstruction of secularism (for a differentiated discussion, see March 2015). For the purposes of the remainder of this book, I home in on one message from the controversy between the scholars who contribute to the politics-of-secularism debate, on the one hand, and their critics, on the other. The relationship between Islamists and the West – or in this book, the world order under Western hegemony – needs to be made more complex in two ways.

First, I see the danger of drawing an all-too-simplistic picture of both Islamism and the West, as identified by the second group of authors, the critics mentioned above. Neither secularism nor the Western world order should be conceived of as an unchangeable or unequivocal structure. Both are discursively contested from within and from outside the West – which is itself home to various practices and intellectual traditions, including several secularisms and liberalisms. The power of these structures should also 'not be understood as absolute, but hegemonic and therefore constantly open to struggle and contestation' (Mavelli and Petito 2014, 6). In this sense, Islamists – like other actors in a world order under Western hegemony – certainly do have agency. This fact has so far been neglected as a direct object of inquiry in the critical debate on secularism (March 2015, 110–11). This book aims to provide such a perspective by conducting an empirical analysis of Islamists' position vis-à-vis the Western-dominated world order. To this end, it is necessary to first disaggregate and paint a more nuanced picture of the Western-dominated world order, which is what I seek to do in Chapter 2.

Second, however, I concur with the first group of scholars contributing to the politics-of-secularism debate in their assessment that the West does have

an obsession with a supposedly dangerous Islam and especially what is framed as an Islamist threat. As I show in the next section, there is an abundance of evidence of both the securitisation of Islam and the 'evilisation' of Islamism in the GWOT era. What is more, the position of violent rejectionism as held by a small group of Salafi jihadists has managed to almost monopolise the notion of what an Islamist is, what they think about the Western-dominated world order, and how they behave towards it. We might refer to this as the al-Qaʿida/ISIS effect on Western perceptions of political Islam.[8] However, Islamists' agency and the repertoire available to them transcend violent rejection, as I will argue in the remainder of this chapter.

The Stubborn Persistence of the Islamist Enemy Image

As has also been seen in other disciplines, IR, peace and conflict studies, and security studies reconfigured their theoretical understanding of religion and its role in politics under the impression of the ostensibly pervasive Islamist threat. Even before 2001, scholars of international security came to the conclusion that the alleged danger of religion 'has most keenly been felt in the form of an alleged threat from . . . primarily Islamic fundamentalism' (Laustsen and Wæver 2000, 705). With the attacks of 9/11, the destiny of what was then called 'Islamic terrorism' at the top of Western security agendas was sealed. A plethora of studies appeared, seeking to understand political Islam and in particular its violent manifestations, as well as what might constitute suitable policy reactions (for a rich and critical discussion, see Volpi 2010). Even though phenomena that relate to Islam, the 'Middle East' and North Africa, and Muslim-majority societies were (and still are) overrepresented in social science accounts of religion, empirical studies have become more varied. The 'obsession' with Islam itself became the basis for innovative theory-building and critical inquiries, as the previous chapter demonstrated. The academic attention devoted to the concepts of 'political Islam' and 'Islamism', however, entailed a blurring of important distinctions, the proliferation of definitions and, simultaneously, the interchangeable use of terms that describe divergent phenomena, actors and behaviours (Volpi 2010, 149–50).

This conceptual vagueness in academic discourse fed into but was also informed by a highly securitised public and political discourse on 'Islamic terrorism'. As concepts in use, 'Islamism' and 'political Islam' were often directly

associated with jihadism, violence and terrorism. This was one effect of the aforementioned GWOT frame which George W. Bush introduced into his rhetoric after the 9/11 attacks and which subsequently proliferated – albeit not without resistance or calls for alternative framings – to European and other contexts. In the course of the GWOT, several practices, laws and institutions were established to fight terrorism in and beyond the West (Josua 2021), culminating in what has been called a 'transnational counter-terrorism order' (De Londras 2019). In the US, the GWOT frame served to legitimate several counterterrorism policies which often operated through the externalisation of the terrorist threat (Hellmuth 2021). These infamous measures included torture, offshore detention and extraordinary renditions, mass surveillance, the use of military force, including smaller-scale military and special operations, and drone strikes in several countries, as well as larger counterterrorism operations like the French-led Operation Barkhane in Mali (2014–22) with the G5 Sahel countries as partners, and finally fully fledged wars in Afghanistan (2001–21) and Iraq (2003–11, 2014–21) conducted by coalitions of Western (and Arab) states.

Stacey Gutkowski (2014, 5) calls these the '9/11 wars' and suggests that they revealed 'secular *ways of war*, habits of doing and behaving in war' (original emphasis). In her study of the British secular security habitus, she shows that the security and public discourse on Islam, Islamism and jihadism evolved over time to become more knowledgeable and nuanced. However, the initial reaction to 9/11, constructed as an 'unintelligible, insurmountable and "cultural" trauma for the West' (Gutkowski 2014, 20), was marked by hysteresis. State apparatuses were not calibrated to respond to jihadism. On the one hand, Gutkowski argues, this was visible in the way knowledge on al-Qaʻida and jihadism was produced. As she demonstrates using the British case, in their attempt to learn as quickly as possible about this previously underestimated phenomenon, security circles readily found and embraced the myths of religious violence and the clash of civilisations. This led to the 'production . . . of jihadist Islamism as a reified (and surprisingly coherent) knowledge category for British foreign and security strategists, politicians and senior officers' (Gutkowski 2014, 29). In 2001–3, the 'diagnostic period' (Gutkowski 2014, 31) of the 9/11 wars, the enemy was constructed as a 'global Islamist threat' or 'global jihad'. Even among academics it was not uncommon to equate

al-Qaʻida with Islam. There was an outright 'fetishization of . . . Islamic fundamentalism' (Gutkowski 2014, 95). But according to Gutkowski, the al-Qaʻida brand of Salafi jihadism had 'yet to pose a realistic threat to the current liberal, secular global order' (2014, 18).

On the other hand, European and US armed forces also lacked the military and tactical abilities required for counterinsurgency wars and found it difficult to adapt to what seemed like an ever-changing insurgency. The 'military approach to counter-terrorism' was premised on the assumption that 'fighting them "over there" is better than waiting until terrorist attacks at home' (Boyle 2019, 385). For the war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan, this entailed a blending of counterterrorism, focused on the use of kinetic force, with the 'winning the hearts and minds' approach of counterinsurgency (Boyle 2019, 386–9) as set down in *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5), which was published in 2006.

Given the failure of the counterterrorism measures taken, the US shifted to a '"strategy against violent extremism" [to address] a wider perceived problem of "support in the Muslim world for radical Islam"' (Kundnani and Hayes 2018, 6) from 2005 onwards. The turn to 'violent extremism' and 'radical Islam' exacerbated the effects of the GWOT within Western societies. Here, the idea that there was a 'direct connection between "Islam" and "Terrorism"' (Mavelli 2013, 165) increasingly took root, despite a more nuanced discourse among parts of the political elites and security circles. The fear that individuals would radicalise and become 'lone wolves' (Byman 2017), part of a 'leaderless jihad' (Sageman 2008) or perpetrators of 'stochastic terrorism' (Robinson 2021) reinforced the image of a potential threat 'from within' Western societies in the form of 'homegrown terrorism' (Hafez and Mullins 2015). The shift to the 'preventing and countering violent extremism' (PCVE) terminology further blurred the distinction between violent action and ideological sympathy (Kundnani and Hayes 2018, 6), supporting the general suspicion towards Muslim individuals, communities and organisations and the securitisation of Islam (Mavelli 2013). Not only were Muslims increasingly subjected to extraordinary measures, such as renditions and detentions; Western societies also discussed several variations of the 'Muslim question' (Mandaville 2021), such as the possibility of 'appropriate integration' of Muslims, the Muslim 'threat' to Western values such as democracy, freedom and secular-

ism, and the fear of a cultural 'Islamisation' of European societies through the 'waves' of Muslim refugees, as propagated by anti-Islamic movements and parties (see, for example, Mavelli 2012, Roy 2013a, Nabers 2016). The GWOT, then, gave rise to Islamophobia as a phenomenon of global scope (Bakali and Hafez 2022).

Public and political discourse also fell down several slippery conceptual and normative slopes attached to the terms 'Islamism' and 'political Islam'. On the one hand, the two terms were often equated with Islam. This meant that Muslims were viewed as the Other relative to Western values because they were not able to draw a line between private faith and public politics. On the other hand, 'Islamism' and 'political Islam' were part of a larger set of labels used to describe the 'global threat' Muslims allegedly posed. These labels included 'militant Islam', 'Islamic fundamentalism', 'Islamic extremism', 'jihadism', 'Salafi jihadism', 'jihadi terrorism', 'global jihad', 'Islamic terrorism', 'violent extremism', 'religiously motivated terrorism' and so on (Volpi 2010, 149–50). And while careful and nuanced analyses were present at an early stage, and important counterdiscourses emerged during the GWOT years, too, the idea of a 'global Islamist threat' persisted. This concept was renewed and, to some degree, dramatised through the rise of ISIS in the 2010s. While the group's inception dates back to 1999, it reached the peak of its power in 2014 (Bamber-Zryd 2022). Due to its sophisticated media strategy (Harmon and Bowdish 2018, 209–13), ISIS 'captured the imagination of a global public and positioned itself at the centre of . . . security debates' at the time (Friis 2018, 244). ISIS managed, through transgressive forms of violence (Friis 2018, 256) and by making mediatisation a constitutive part of this violent logic (Pfeifer and Günther 2021), to convince a global audience that its evilness went 'beyond anything we [had] ever seen' (Friis 2015, Richards 2017, Rogers 2018, Fermor 2021).

The rise of ISIS and its considerable success in gaining and holding territory in Iraq and Syria, the attacks it committed in Europe (and, as tends to be forgotten, other parts of the world) and the military efforts by the GCAD since 2014 had an important effect: 'Islamism' was associated with the violent rejection of not only Western values and norms but the global order and its core principles and institutions per se. A lack of distinction between Salafi jihadism, on the one hand, and Islamism as well as other forms of political Islam, on the

other, led to the perception that ISIS's performance of violent rejectionism was somehow representative of Islamists' position towards the world order. More generally, it also contributed to the ignorance of Islamist diversity and intra-Islamist struggles (Milton-Edwards 2014). In 2020, on the occasion of the anniversary of the 2019 attacks in Nice, the French minister of the interior, Gérald Darmanin, reminded the public that 'we' are at 'war against an internal and external enemy . . . the Islamist ideology . . . a form of twenty-first century fascism' (Lepelletier 2020). This snapshot of a strongly martial framing of the problem should not be considered typical of Western political discourse and, even though we could identify similar examples from other European and North American states, the 'lumpers' are probably a minority compared to the 'splitters' (Lynch 2017). Nevertheless, a loud minority can still have quite an effect. This is, for instance, reflected in the almost constant and, relative to actual numbers and risk assessments, highly exaggerated threat perception of terrorism among US citizens. Despite articulate and well-founded warnings expressed at an early stage that 'fears of the omnipotent terrorist . . . may have been overblown' (Mueller 2006, 8), no significant changes in threat perceptions seem to have occurred since the early years of the GWOT (Krause et al. 2022).[9]

Moving beyond the Image of Islamist Rejectionism: Between Recognising and Resisting Global Order

In light of this diagnosis, my book further contributes to developing a more nuanced view of Islamism, specifically from the perspective of its relationship with the Western world order. While no such study exists to date, the rich scholarship on non-state actors in the MENA region and on Islamism offers very fertile ground for cultivating a nuanced study on Islamists and the world order. In IR, non-state actors are still underrepresented when it comes to studying their external behaviour beyond the resort to violence or potential security threat. With regard to armed non-state actors, May Darwich (2021b, 2) recently suggested that their 'actorness and foreign relations [should be established] as a new area of inquiry for foreign policy analysis'. Indeed, research on ANSAs has so far mainly focused on their violent behaviour in the context of civil wars. In the last ten years, however, the study of ANSAs' order-building has become a lively field of inquiry. One important debate, now established at

the core of conflict studies, investigates the phenomenon of rebel governance (Malthaner and Malešević 2022, Loyle et al. 2023, Pfeifer and Schwab 2023a). Something that is so far underrepresented in this debate, however, is how ANSAs establish external relations during wartime and peacetime to influence (global) politics through non-violent means. The exceptions here are studies of rebel diplomacy (Coggins 2015, Huang 2016) and, more broadly, the study of ANSAs' struggle for recognition (Geis, Clément, and Pfeifer 2021). ANSAs address international, even global, audiences (Clément, Geis, and Pfeifer 2021, Pfeifer 2021, Sienknecht 2021) and are embedded in global normative structures (Hensell and Schlichte 2021). The study of rebels as contributing to the production of order, as well as the recent attention that IR has cautiously devoted to ANSAs and their actorness in international relations, are two fields to which this study seeks to make a contribution.

The third is the academic debate on Islamism. This is mainly rooted in area studies and rarely overlaps with the other two fields (exceptions are Cook and Maher 2023, Darwich 2021a, Stein 2021). As has been argued in the context of the 'area studies controversy' (Valbjørn 2017, Bank and Busse 2021), IR only produces limited theory-oriented knowledge on the MENA region and is often reluctant to revisit its theoretical assumptions.[10] It also tends to focus narrowly on militant Islamists, which reinforces the false impression that political Islam is associated with violence. Conversely, the study of Islamism is often confined to national and regional contexts rather than being positioned in the study of international or global politics (exceptions are Dionigi 2014, Adraoui 2018, Darwich 2021b, 2021a).

One core debate in the field revolves around the meaning of Islamism, its distinction from conceptual neighbours and the questioning of the dichotomies that structure inquiries. Among such binaries is the distinction between state and non-state politics where the former is associated with secular rule and the latter with religious opposition (Cesari 2014). As early as the 1990s, some authors suggested that Islam was being used as 'the language of politics in the Muslim world' (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996, 12) by both rulers and opponents. The more common view, however, conceptualises political Islam as the politicisation and instrumentalisation of Islam by Islamist actors using religion as a tool of opposition against the allegedly or self-proclaimed secular state. A similar framing was also used by rulers who felt threatened by the mass protests

in the course of the Arab uprisings and sought to delegitimise the opposition (Pfeifer 2017). But studies show that Arab states, rather than refraining from intervening in the religious sphere or maintaining a 'neutral' secular posture, had established a hegemonic status for Islam as part of their nation-building projects in the twentieth century. They nationalised religious institutions and personnel, and religious doctrine was taught in public schools. They legally discriminated against other religions in the public sector and restricted certain rights and freedoms on religious grounds (Cesari 2014, 3–18). Recently, the sharp distinction between state and non-state actors has been questioned on a more general level (see, for example, Pfeifer and Schwab 2023b). Authors in the field have argued that non-state actors should be viewed as contributing to the production of regional order and as partners in state hegemonic strategies (Stein 2021). Others have demonstrated that core concepts in Islam are mobilised by and contested between state and non-state actors alike (Piscatori and Saikal 2019). Finally, some have suggested understanding Islamism not as a label to be attached to a certain kind of actor but more broadly as a discourse.[11] For instance, Islamism is then coneptualised as 'an articulatory practice whose characterisation lies in its ability to hegemonise the whole discursive horizon by turning "Islam" into the master signifier of the Muslim communities' (Mura 2015, 25).

A second core debate in the study of Islamism concerns the question of how to classify different actors and their evolution over time. As a key author in the field, Olivier Roy defines Islamism rather narrowly as 'the explicit recasting of Islam as a political ideology . . . and a stress on the need to control and build an "Islamic state"' (Roy 2012a, 19–20). It is this Islamist project of transforming society through the state that Roy concluded had failed in the early 1990s: 'The Islamic revolution, the Islamic state, the Islamic economy are myths,' he stated (1994, 27). But this 'collapse of Islamism as a political ideology' (Roy 2013b, 16) did not imply that Islamist movements would disappear. Rather, Roy predicted two developments. On the one hand, some Islamist actors would opt for a trajectory of transformation into a conservative party (along the Turkish AKP model). These actors would become post-Islamist. On the other hand, he expected some Islamists to be further challenged by the rise of neofundamentalism 'that stressed a strict return to purely religious norms' (Roy 2013b, 16). Salafists, whether quietist, political or violent, belong to this trend (Wiktorowicz 2006). In the simplest terms, Salafism is a 'philo-

sophical outlook which seeks to revive the practices of the first three generations of Islam' or which 'believes in progression through regression' (Maher 2016, 7). Salafists may use different methods, including violent ones. If they resort to violence, they are called Salafi jihadists. The most widely known representatives of Salafism are two Salafi-jihadist groups, al-Qaʻida and ISIS. Both are what Fawaz Gerges (2016, 24) calls a marriage between ultraconservative Wahhabism ('Saudi Salafism') and the radical jihadism developed in Egypt in the 1950s and 1960s by Sayyid Qutb and his disciples. Whereas al-Qaʻida was an 'underground, transnational, borderless organization', ISIS additionally 'managed to blend in with local Sunni communities' (Gerges 2016, 223) and made establishing statehood its core strategy. Another important innovation of this second generation of Salafi jihadism was the reorganisation of enemy images. The ISIS organisation created a hierarchy of these images based on a sectarian logic, with the Syrian regime and Shiʻa at the top, thus becoming ISIS's primary enemies (Hegghammer 2014). All this proved to give ISIS a comparative advantage over al-Qaʻida.

The violence and visibility of Salafi jihadism overshadowed other forms of political Islam. Militant versus non-militant became the key distinction in the academic debate (Volpi and Stein 2015, 279–80). The controversy was also connected to the question of whether (some) Islamists could play a conducive role in processes of democratisation and, if so, how. As a consequence, the radical-versus-moderate binary was *en vogue* in the 2000s and the inclusion-moderation hypothesis gained prominence among scholars (critically Schwedler 2011). The latter suggested that Islamists who were made part of the democratic game would deradicalise and be socialised into the political system. There was much criticism of the concept of 'radical Islam' (Kazmi 2022), the distinction between radical and moderate, and the latter's normative value in autocratic contexts, as well as the empirical validity of the inclusion-moderation thesis (Cavatorta and Merone 2013, Netterstrøm 2015). A key problem with the label 'radical' was that it prevented a distinction being drawn between such diametrically opposed actors as al-Qaʻida and Hezbollah (Schwedler 2011). At the same time, it obscured ideological similarities between militant and non-militant Salafists. To solve some of the above-mentioned issues and escape the focus on (non-)violence and (non-)moderation, Frédéric Volpi and Ewan Stein (2015) proposed separating statist from non-statist Islamists. The

latter are Salafist groups that used to avoid formal politics and have thus often been tolerated by the authoritarian regimes. Some of them advocate violence for ideological reasons rather than in reaction to state repression. In contrast, statist Islamists practise 'institutionalized participation in the politics of the nation state' (Volpi and Stein 2015, 282) and do not seek to overturn the existing social order. They are usually representative of a middle class and (came to) adopt a reformist discourse which also appeals to the lower middle class. In their respective authoritarian context, at some point, statist Islamists decided to participate in the system, even though phases of (illiberal) participation alternated with episodes of harsh repression against them. Over time, they gave up on certain claims, notably including the goal of establishing Islamic statehood.

In this book, I concentrate on such statist Islamists. More specifically, I am interested in Islamists that are part of the incumbent regime and therefore exposed to and required to adopt a position vis-à-vis the Western world order (see Chapter 3). For purely practical reasons, such actors do not have the 'luxury' of adopting a simple position of violent rejection as Salafi jihadists like al-Qaʿida and ISIS do. The latter are indeed 'irreconcilably estranged from the state, regarding it as a heretical and artificial unit, . . . [and they reject] constitutional politics [and] the international system' (Maher 2016, 11). But the politics of rejection is an unwarranted reduction of a whole spectrum of theoretically possible and empirically observable positions Islamists hold with regard to the global order. I argue that statist Islamists recognise the norms and conceptions of this order and seek recognition for their identity within it (Clément, Geis and Pfeifer 2021). Yet Islamists also resist some practices and principles and aim at transforming the world order from within. They do not, however, reject the order as a whole – no actor can adopt such a dissident position unless they position themselves outside that very order (Deitelhoff and Daase 2021, 128–9).[12]

These three ideal types of world order politics – rejection, resistance, recognition – are in principle not specific to Islamist actors and could be applied in the analysis of any other actor. Empirical cases will not match one ideal type perfectly. We can expect incumbent, statist Islamists to be positioned somewhere between the two poles of recognition and resistance. Groups also change their stance over time, for example leaving rejectionism behind or

moving from a more resistant to a more recognisant position or vice versa. World order politics of one and the same actor vary over time, due to changes in their identity and their domestic context, but also within what has so far simply been called the 'Western world order'. This term will be explained, disaggregated and de-essentialised in Chapter 2 – along similar lines to the de- and reconstruction of 'Islamism' in this chapter. Here, I have shown that we should not simply assume that all Islamists are dangerous, anti-democratic, anti-liberal – and oppose the Western world order. I have proposed a more nuanced repertoire of positions that Islamists can take. What can, in fact, be expected from Islamist world order discourse is a combination of practices of recognition and resistance, transformation, adaptation and pushing the boundaries of the Western discursive space. It would be implausible for the statist Islamists under study here to adopt a position of simple rejectionism. After all, incumbent Islamists rule in a world which is actually shaped by Western hegemony. They cannot fully escape the order and the discourse from which it emerges and on which it is built. But this does not mean that Islamists are left with the choice of either succumbing to this order or rejecting it. Structure should not be overestimated. Rather, Islamists are somewhat complicit in producing, reproducing and transforming this very order. This means that they have agency and a whole repertoire of violent and non-violent means at their disposal.

Islamists of the sort that this book is interested in do not simply promote divine sovereignty as an alternative to the Westphalian state system. They do not base their legitimacy claims on simplistic notions of totalitarian polities, caliphates or imamates, nor do they flatly reject democracy. And they also have complex, responsive and worldly normative aspirations or *teloi* rather than projecting these ambitions onto the afterlife. Islamist world order discourse is more intricate. It is a modern and pluralist discourse (E. S. Hurd 2007) in which problems and their solutions are discussed for the here and now – including conceptions of global order. Sovereignty, legitimacy and *teloi* are also anything but unequivocal and uncontested with the Western world order discourse, as the next chapter will show.

Notes

1. All of the scholars referenced in this paragraph challenge these overly simplistic images of Islam but show that these clichés exist among policymakers and/or in some academic accounts. The references should thus be prefixed with the qualifier 'critically'.

2. This interpretation of the secularisation paradigm diverges from the understanding proposed by Bruce (2002, 30) in that it includes the normative side of secularism.

3. Even though he adopted a functionalist approach to religion, Luckmann ([1966] 1991) made quite similar claims about secularisation. As is typical of functional definitions, he employs a very broad understanding of religion. For him, the anthropological capacity of an organism to become a person by transcending its naturalness or biological nature is already 'a fundamentally religious operation' (Luckmann [1966] 1991, 87, author's translation). As religious operations are part of human nature, they will not disappear but rather change their form and appearance. Consequently, Luckmann conceptualises secularisation as the 'detachment of *institutional* norms and values from the cosmos of religious meaning-making [*Sinngebung*]' (1985, 39, author's translation, original emphasis).

4. For a criticism of the 'return' and 'resurgence' rhetoric, which presupposes a previous decline or disappearance of religion, see, for example, Mufti (2013).

5. In the literature, this strand of research is sometimes labelled 'postsecularist'; see, for example, Mufti (2013), Mavelli and Petito (2012) and Wilson (2014).

6. It is important to note that Asad himself explicitly states that Islamists should be 'understood on their own terms as being at once modern and traditional, both authentic and creative at the same time': https://talalasad.blogspot.com/2010/11 /modern-power-and-reconfiguration-of.html (accessed 17 October 2023).

7. It has also been argued that the binary between an essentialised 'West' and 'Islam' was co-produced by Islamic thinkers in categories that were similar to those used by Orientalists; see Jung (2011).

8. In this way, they also essentialise the idea of the West and equate it with liberalism. For uses of the 'West', see Hellmann and Herborth (2017).

9. It remains to be seen whether this will change with the war of aggression against and full-scale invasion of Ukraine that Russia launched in 2022 and a potential readjustment of global threat perceptions.

10. In fact, exploring Islamic contributions to the field of IR and challenging the Eurocentrism of the discipline is the goal of the International Relations and

Islamic Studies Research Cohort (Co-IRIS), founded in 2013. The cohort connects its intellectual project to an agenda of a broader presence for Islamic approaches to IR in publications, conferences and workshops. See, for example, Abdelkader, Adiong and Mauriello (2016), Adiong, Mauriello and Abdelkader (2018).

11. See also Talal Asad's understanding as expressed in the interview with Saba Mahmood https://talalasad.blogspot.com/2010/11/modern-power-and-reconfiguration-of.html (accessed 17 October 2023).

12. I deviate from Deitelhoff and Daase's (2021) use of the resistance terminology in so far as I understand rejectionism, or what they call dissidence, not as a form of resistance but rather as a position towards the world order in its own right.

2

A DISCURSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF WORLD ORDER: SOVEREIGNTY, LEGITIMACY AND *TELOI*

Since the mid-2010s, IR has debated significant potential or imminent transformations of the global order. To some, the core concern was whether what they call the 'liberal international order' (Ikenberry, Parmar and Stokes 2018, Ikenberry 2020, Weiss and Wallace 2021) was going to survive, along with its institutions, norms and rules. For this order faced serious challenges, both internal and external. Scholars also tried to explain where this crisis came from in the first place. The 'surge of Islamic fundamentalism, revisionism in Russia, the rise of China, and antiglobalization movements, as well as the proliferation of right-wing populism and nationalism in Europe and the US' were named as causes of the crisis – but also interpreted as a result of the post-'Cold War' transformation of the liberal international order itself (Börzel and Zürn 2021, 286). Institutionalist approaches emphasised the legitimacy problems of global governance (Zürn 2018) or rising powers' pursuit of equal status and their varying success within existing institutions (Mukherjee 2022) as sources of conflict in the world order. Against the background of the rise of China, some even predicted an 'authoritarian century' (Ogden 2022), while others diagnosed the return of a 'great-power politics', which had never really vanished in the first place. They were concerned about the re-emergence of territorial defence on Western security agendas, at the latest since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 (Mearsheimer 2014a, 2014b, Meijer and Wyss 2019) and almost exclusively since the beginning of the Russian war of aggression

against Ukraine in 2022. Others still forecast that 'liberal hegemony' would come to an end and give way to a 'multiplex world' (Acharya 2017) or a 'multi-order world' (Flockhart 2016, Flockhart and Korosteleva 2022). Despite their rootedness in different schools of IR, from liberalism and institutionalism to realism and constructivism, what all of these approaches share is that they diagnose a moment of crisis in the Western world order – be it because of the challenge to liberal institutions posed by non-democratic, illiberal states; material power shifts and the return of interstate war; or the resistance against norms and values previously deemed universal but now representing just one of many possible normative orders. In one way or another, they lament or welcome the prospect that the world order is going to have to deal with a certain degree of 'Westlessness' (Flockhart 2022).

But what might the term 'Western world order' mean in the first place? I build on the understanding, from a sociological IR perspective, of the deep structures of global order as intersubjectively shared principles, norms and beliefs that fulfil ordering functions, notably defining legitimate actors and rightful action in the international system (see, for example, Reus-Smit 1997, Buzan 2009). But while certain interpretations may be shared or become hegemonic, this does not imply that the meaning of these structures is uncontested. Rather, competing discourses and meanings underpin the deep structures of global order. The previous chapter has already warned against essentialising both 'Islamists' and the 'West', including the use of these concepts with specific qualifiers (dangerous, religious, irrational, peaceful, secular, liberal etc.) and their construction as antagonistic Others. The previous chapter also questioned the structural determinism sometimes present in critical analyses of secularism or, more generally, the 'West'. Islamists are subjected to the structures of the world order, which, for instance, produces and reproduces their position as the enemy. At the same time, however, as actors in international politics (Adraoui 2018), they are subjects who have agency in politics beyond regional and domestic contexts.

This chapter aims to de-essentialise the 'West' by disaggregating the 'Western world order' discourse. It thereby identifies spaces of agency even for those actors outside the West who, at first glance, have for the longest time seemed marginal from the perspective of world order (Acharya 2018a, Zarakol 2022). Such a discursive understanding of world order suggests that

it is produced through utterances by a variety of actors who are embedded in asymmetrical power relations. These actors are at once both part of and subjected to the structure of global discourse. But they also can and indeed have to interpret this order and adopt a position in relation to it. Through their actions, they may thus recognise, reproduce and even co-produce the order, or they may resist, oppose and challenge it. As we saw in the previous chapter, actors like al-Qaʿida or ISIS even try to position themselves outside this structure and choose to violently reject, transgress and fight it.

Understanding world order as a discourse does not mean discarding the material side of the world (order). Rather, it suggests that social phenomena like the world order are 'the contingent, temporary, more or less sedimented (institutionalized) product of ongoing discursive struggles' (Stengel 2020, 25). This does not mean that the world order is without material foundations, resources or practices. But it 'exist[s] only because people collectively believe [it] exist[s] and act accordingly' (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001, 393). It gains its social meaning from being interpreted in a way that is socially accessible, conceivable and, at least to a certain degree, acceptable. Discourse is the 'space where [such] intersubjective meaning is created, sustained, transformed and, accordingly, becomes constitutive of social reality' (Holzscheiter 2014, 144). Importantly, a discursive understanding of world order is also not power blind. I assume that the world order has been and still is hierarchical in that it assigns subject positions with varying degrees of power, in terms of those subjects being both able to make themselves heard (which includes material factors) and endowed with discursive authority in a certain context (Stengel 2020, 31–2).

I support the view that there is Western hegemony in the global order. This hegemony began to develop after World War II, but consolidated after the end of the 'Cold War'. By 'Western hegemony', I mean both that self-proclaimed liberal actors (the 'West' under US leadership) are in the most powerful position and that Western discourse is pervasive, albeit internally contested. Most authors focus on certain features deemed key to the Western order as the liberal international order: 'free trade; post-war multilateral institutions; the growth of democracy; and liberal values' (Acharya 2017, 272). Some have argued that (parts of) the liberal international order can survive without the West or may even benefit from its absence (Flockhart 2022).

Others have simply assumed that the liberal international order was 'bound to fail' in the first place (Mearsheimer 2019). The discursive approach pursued in this book views liberal ideas of order as one part of the 'Western' discourse on world order. Not only are there intellectual traditions beyond or in opposition to the liberal strand in 'Western' discourse, liberalism is also not exclusively reserved for the 'West' but can theoretically be used by any actor. By focusing on the discursive construction of world order, I can show that there is no single 'Western' world order, but rather many versions of it.

Revealing the nuanced and fragmented character of the 'Western' discourse on world order is in itself a step towards deconstructing sharp dichotomous distinctions: the self-perception of the world order as liberal (and therefore secular) is particularly pronounced in the construction of the 'Islamist' enemy image. If we acknowledge not only the plurality of Islamism but also the equivocality and internal contentedness of the Western world order, the notion of a binary opposition of the two becomes increasingly questionable. While the liberal is only one of several traditions present in Western discourse, the world order is also too abstract and too big a conceptual 'container' to be of analytical value. In the tradition of Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Laclau 2007), the term 'world order' could be described as an 'empty signifier' or a 'signifier without a signified . . . whose temporary signifieds are the result of a political competition' (Laclau 2007, 36, 35). In this reading, the 'liberal world order' could be interpreted as one such concept with a temporarily fixed meaning or an attempt at establishing hegemony which has constructed the 'Islamist' (and some linked equivalents such as 'jihadist', 'terrorist', 'radical', 'fundamentalist', 'extremist', 'irrational' etc.; see Stengel 2020, 28–31) as a 'common other that symbolizes a threat to this order and thus embodies disorder' (Wojczewski 2018, 38).

But we should not exaggerate the pervasiveness and stability of such a constitutive or radical Other. Rather, a constructed Self can have multiple Others who appear more or less threatening and are attributed different properties and qualities over time. So, while the 'Islamist' may indeed have been the West's radical Other in some periods, for instance directly after the 9/11 attacks, its 'Otherness' changed over time, as briefly touched upon in the previous chapter. It became less threatening with the emergence of alternative Others and learning processes, which led to a partial deconstruction – only

to become a radical Other again when ISIS rose to its full power. It therefore makes sense to think about Selves and Others in relative terms, as 'a series of related yet slightly different juxtapositions that can be theorized as constituting processes of linking and differentiation' and as being situated in a 'web of identities' (Hansen 2006, 37, 40).

The focus of this book is on those actors who have been placed under the umbrella term 'Islamism' and identified as Other but who do not simply accept and live with this fate. Instead, they make use of their discursive agency, challenging hegemonic constructions of world order while simultaneously being subjected to them. Empty signifiers like 'world order' are 'never completely empty but [have] an indeterminable signified in that [they] can have various competing meanings and thus serve as a surface of inscription for various political articulations' (Wojczewski 2018, 37). The struggle over (temporarily) fixing the meaning of 'world order' takes place on a global level, albeit on very unequal footing, and it takes place within the West, as well as outside the West.

Chapters 4 to 6 will analyse how two actors belonging to the realm discursively covered by the term 'Islamism', the Tunisian Ennahda and the Lebanese Hezbollah, make use of their agency and employ discursive strategies to contribute to the construction of and challenge the world order (see also Milliken 1999, 229–31). In its empirical part, the book takes an actor-centred discourse analytical perspective that focuses on the 'communicative processes in which agents actively construct, re-negotiate, and transform intersubjectively shared interpretations of reality' (Holzscheiter 2014, 147). Actors – in this case two Islamist parties – struggle to recast their image, gain recognition for their claimed identity and delineate themselves from other actors, as well as interpret the world order, position themselves in relation to it and discursively establish world order alternatives. And they do so in and against the structure of a Western discourse on world order which is simultaneously hegemonic, compared to non-Western discourse on world order, and internally contested.[1]

In this chapter, I offer a structured reading of this Western discourse, which allows me to develop a matrix that spans the discourse and approximately identifies the 'limits of the sayable' (Butler 2004, 17) with regard to world order in the West. I do not claim that all interpretations are covered. But I do aim to represent both hegemonic and marginal positions within Western discourse. I use academic accounts as a proxy for Western discourse on world

order, being fully aware that this implies another limitation of the proposed matrix. Academic discourse tries to grasp what is happening in the world and could be seen as an accumulation of interpretations of reality. Despite the mechanisms of self-correction and reflection at its disposal, the knowledge produced in academic discourse is biased, power-laden and powerful. Some discourses can even become so authoritative that it is virtually impossible to transcend them, as Edward Said famously wrote on Orientalism: 'I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism' (Said [1978] 2003, 4). But for the purposes of this chapter, suffice it to say that academia makes political discourses, including the 'world order' discourse, its object of study. We can assume that academic discourse reproduces, feeds into, criticises, reflects upon and analyses, but also enables and supports, and therefore in many ways encompasses, political discourse (see also Wojczewski 2018, 41).

In order to draw the contours of the available meanings in Western world order discourse(s), I disaggregate the term 'world order' into, and reconstruct different discursive traditions in, discursive fields which revolve around three concepts: (1) sovereignty, (2) political legitimacy and (3) the goals and values an order should bring about, which I call *teloi*. These *teloi* are connected to greater historical narratives. Again, I do not claim that this is the only way to think about world order, or to capture and structure Western discourse on it.[2] Rather, I follow Hedley Bull's established and pragmatic definition of order:

> To say of a number of things that together they display order is . . . to say that they are related to one another according to some pattern, that their relationship is not purely hap-hazard but contains some discernible principle . . . [Order] in social life is . . . a pattern that leads to a particular result, an arrangement of social life such that it promotes certain goals or values. (Bull 1995, 3–4)

In these three discursive fields, possible answers to the core questions of order are negotiated: (1) What is it that is ordered? (2) How is it ordered? (3) To what end? They cover the main discursive battlefields in the global discourse on world order. (1) Sovereignty refers to the entities in the order, (2) legitimacy to the principle according to which these entities are ordered and (3) *teloi* to

the normative aspirations connected to world order. In the remainder of this chapter, four discursive strands within Western discourse for each of these fields are identified and characterised. These four 'ideal types' of sovereignty, legitimacy and *teloi* serve as a nuanced representation of Western discourse on the respective element of the world order to which Islamist discourses can be related. How exactly this can be done methodologically will be explained in the last section of the chapter.

Sovereignty, or What Entities Make Up the World Order

The topic of sovereignty originates in the early debates of modern political theory, as for instance represented in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Du contrat social* (1762), and has been a recurring subject of treatises in philosophy ever since. It has also been one of the key issues in the discipline of IR since its foundation. With ongoing processes of globalisation and transnationalisation, the issue of sovereignty is debated anew in normative and analytical respects, including in what has sometimes been considered a new field of inquiry – international political theory (Kuntz and Volk 2014, 9). While political philosophy used to justify political order within the nation-state and IR saw states as the basic units of the international system, such state-centred approaches are now being challenged. Binaries such as inside/outside and local/global are hard to maintain (R. B. J. Walker 1993, Kuntz and Volk 2014). In IR, the constructivist turn in the 1990s had already allowed sovereignty to be historicised as state sovereignty (Philpott 2001). As 'normative conception[s] that [link] authority, territory, population (society, nation), and recognition in a unique way and in a particular place (the state)' (Biersteker and Weber 1996, 3), state-based conceptions of sovereignty are bound to a particular temporal and spatial context. This also means that sovereignty can be constructed in different ways. I identify four paradigms of sovereignty in Western discourse: absolute, popular, shared and conditional sovereignty. Sovereignty as a discursive field contains two types of claims. On the one hand, understandings of sovereignty explain why a certain subject should be considered the (last) autonomous unit with the legitimate right to self-determination. Thus, there is an intrinsic normative quality to sovereignty claims – and they also always have a component of justification which cannot be strictly separated from claims of political legitimacy. On the other hand, by

defining this last unit, sovereignty claims also determine the units which make up an order.

Absolute Sovereignty

In the history of ideas, Thomas Hobbes could be considered the founding father of absolute sovereignty. As the only possible escape from his (fictive) state of nature with a *bellum omnium contra omnes* and logical answer to the security problem, he proposes

> the generation of that great Leviathan, . . . that mortal god to which we owe, under the immortal God, our peace and defence. For by this authority, . . . he hath the use of so much power and strength conferred on him that, by terror thereof, he is enabled to form the wills of them all, to peace at home, and mutual aid against their enemies abroad. (Hobbes 1965, 132)

The sovereign has all-encompassing prerogatives and rights and establishes a monopoly on the use of force, which used to be everyone's right in the state of nature. The sovereign's only obligation is to guarantee the security of the people. Otherwise, they cannot be unjust or act against any rules – for he is the law. A more contemporary version of a philosophical conception of absolute sovereignty can be found in Carl Schmitt's *Political Theology* (1922). Sovereign is he who 'decides on the exception' (C. Schmitt [1985] 2005, 5) and is thereby able to suspend the legal order. In both conceptions, sovereignty is therefore absolute.

Absolute sovereignty is the archetype of modern sovereignty. The anarchic character of the international system, a core concept of neorealist IR theory, is due to the existence of several absolute sovereign states who know no authority above them (Philpott 2001, 16–19). Paradigmatically, Kenneth Waltz connected the concept of sovereignty to his 'like units' argument:

> To call states 'like units' is to say that each state is like all other states in being an autonomous political unit. It is another way of saying that states are sovereign . . . [To] say that states are sovereign is not to say that they can do as they please, that they are free of others' influence, that they are able to get what they want . . . To say that a state is sovereign means that it decides for itself how it will cope with its internal and external problems. (Waltz 1979, 95–6)

The structural equality of states as sovereigns makes the international system a 'self-help system' in which 'units worry about their survival' (Waltz 1979, 105).

Absolute sovereignty has an internal and an external side. Internally, sovereignty is the 'supremacy over all other authorities within [a specific] territory and population' (Bull 1995, 8). This implies final or supreme authority in the domestic arena and effective control. Besides 'independence of outside authorities' (Bull 1995, 8), the external side of sovereignty is often associated with the formal equality of states, also in the legal sense, and the external recognition of authority that grants immunity from external interference (Biersteker and Weber 1996, 2, Krasner 1999, 9–26, Philpott 2001, 18, Zürn and Deitelhoff 2015, 194–5).

These dimensions could be considered the ideal of absolute sovereignty, which most authors agree has never existed in real-world politics. The Peace of Westphalia established the state as the bearer of a sovereignty that was absolute in terms of 'the scope of affairs over which a sovereign body governs within a particular territory' (Philpott 2001, 19), as well as, arguably, the norm of non-intervention. But the geographical boundaries of this sovereignty were quite narrow, merely encompassing Europe and political entities that were labelled 'Christian states' (Philpott 2001, 30–3). Other authors have pointed to the tension between the ideal of absolute sovereignty and state and non-state practice which disconnects the external side of sovereignty from the internal one. For example, states are recognised as equal parts of the state system without effectively holding the ultimate authority within their territory (Krasner 1999, 14–20). And yet, absolute sovereignty not only continues to serve as a 'normative and conceptual aspiration in the minds of individuals' (Zürn and Deitelhoff 2015, 195). It also persists in the legal domain in the form of absolute sovereign rights (Donnelly 2014, 233–5).

Popular Sovereignty

Whereas absolute sovereignty is intimately linked to the modern nation-state, popular sovereignty is rooted in the notion of individual freedom as autonomy. In the history of thought, Jean-Jacques Rousseau was one of the first philosophers to introduce the concept of popular sovereignty as the only and ultimate source of a legitimate polity. In contrast to Hobbes, Rousseau argued

that individual freedom is preserved in the *volonté générale*: 'Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole' (Rousseau 1994, 55).

The idea of popular sovereignty was also at the core of demands for the self-determination of peoples and, thus, colonial independence. While the participation and recognition in the international system of sovereign states used to be a privilege of European states, the colonies being mere 'extensions', a new norm emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. This norm stipulated that 'colonies [be] entitled to statehood however weak their government, however scant their control over their territory, however inchoate their people' (Philpott 2001, 35). In this way, the external and internal dimensions of sovereignty were decoupled. The recognition of a state's international legal status and sovereign equality, understood as the absence of formal hierarchy in the international system, was no longer dependent on the exercise of effective authority and control within that state's territory. Counterintuitively, then, the rise of colonial independence, while motivated by the idea of self-determination, led to a further strengthening of state sovereignty and not necessarily to what might be understood as popular sovereignty in Rousseau's sense. The norm of self-determination merely changed the understanding of what entities 'qualified' as a state, not, however, the idea that states were the legitimate polities in international society, nor their prerogatives. In this sense, statehood was the 'reward' for those peoples who made their way to freedom (Philpott 2001, 28, 35–7, Donnelly 2014, 228).

This contrasts with the many obstacles which pursuing a claim to statehood – as one possible form of self-determination – faces in reality. Self-determination as a right to independent statehood is disputed outside the context of decolonisation and tends to be considered a deviant case. But given the rewards and privileges that come with being a state, the quest for statehood, especially through secession, remains the main means by which groups try to exercise their right to self-determination (Buchanan [2004] 2007, 7, 332–3, Roepstorff 2013, 31–2, 44). Another question in the context of popular sovereignty is who the 'we' is that demands certain rights or what 'self' can legitimately claim self-determination. This is what has been referred to as the 'paradox of popular sovereignty' (Ochoa Espejo 2014, 467). On the one hand,

determining who the people are is so important that it should be decided by the people themselves. On the other hand, this act already presupposes that the boundaries have been drawn around a *demos*. Historically, the most successful solution to this dilemma was the invention of the nation, although there is no causal link between popular sovereignty and the nation (Yack 2001, 517–18) – just as the nation does not necessarily exist prior to the state or popular sovereignty, but may be built after the state has already been established (Jones 2016, 628). Ultimately, this 'solution' to the paradox only shifts the problem to the question of what the nation is – and the answers to this are all problematic in one way or another (see, for example, Höffe 2007, 271–4).

Moving to the external dimension of popular sovereignty, it can be observed that not all quests for statehood are recognised as legitimate, even if they are founded on the idea of a nation, the Kurds and Palestinians being two pertinent examples here. Groups that try to create a *demos* based on something other than the nation, for example transnational identities 'such as class, ethnicity, and religion' (Jones 2016, 627), are denied sovereignty. The close association between the nation and popular sovereignty relies on the idea that 'humanity is divided naturally into nations' and has become normalised to the extent that 'any state that does not express a nation or national idea is potentially illegitimate' (Hurrell 2007, 123, 125). Accordingly, decolonisation is romanticised as a success story at the end of which formerly subjugated peoples have become nation-states and thereby 'full members of an international society . . . [with] full legal equality'. Some denounce this as mere fiction, however, given the persisting inequalities in power and rights among states (Agnew 2005) and the suspicion that anarchy among equal states may actually be constituted by prior hierarchical orders (Mattern and Zarakol 2016, 631).

Conditional Sovereignty

In addition to the persistence of informal hierarchies alongside formal state equality, however, there is also a line of argumentation in favour of abandoning the idea of equal sovereignty altogether (for similar conceptions, see 'conditioned sovereignty' in Prinz and Schetter 2016, or 'gradated sovereignty' in J. M. Hobson 2012, 313–44). States that behave in certain ways internally can lose their recognition as states and their sovereignty externally. This notion of conditional sovereignty was rooted in a return to the individual as the basic

unit of any sovereignty considerations. With the turn to 'human security' in the 1990s and its subsequent institutionalisation in international organisations and promotion by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Owens 2012), the 'universal human rights-centred language of global or cosmopolitan law . . . [replaced] the state-based territorialized language of international relations' (Chandler 2012, 214).

The academic debate soon problematised the potentially violent flipside of 'human security' in the form of 'humanitarian inventions' and, later in the 2000s, the 'responsibility to protect' (R2P). While the old security agenda had focused on containing violence between sovereign states, a state could now (temporarily) forfeit its sovereignty in the most severe cases of human rights violations. The realisation that individuals needed to be shielded from violence committed by their own state gave birth to the concept of humanitarian intervention. But according to the logic of the United Nations (UN) system, this created a tension between two core principles: equal state sovereignty and human rights (Welsh, Thielking and MacFarlane 2002, 489–90). While some insisted on the necessity of the right to intervene, for example in cases of genocide and other crimes against humanity, others favoured the old notion of national sovereignty and its primacy (Evans 2006, 705–6). The contention around humanitarian interventions was the background against which the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty formulated the R2P in 2001. The most important novelty of this principle was that it introduced a new normative dimension to the concept of sovereignty, which now implied 'both [being] responsible to one's own citizens and to the wider international community' (Evans 2006, 708–9).

Some voices in the political and academic arena went even further, claiming that the 'state has a duty not only to protect its own peoples, but also to meet its obligations to the wider international community', and sovereignty 'misused, in the sense of failure to fulfil this responsibility, could become sovereignty denied', where 'direct enforcement is also an option' to ensure compliance (Slaughter 2005, 628). Arguments like this belong to a strand of thought found in parts of IR and international law which claims to stand in the liberal tradition, especially following the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, and no longer prioritises the goal 'to overcome the security dilemma' but rather 'reproduces it between liberal and nonliberal states' (Jahn 2005, 179).

Democratic peace theorists divided the world into a 'zone of peace' that would spread among democracies (Doyle 1983, 226) and a 'zone of war' where an anarchic and violence-prone state of nature was doomed to prevail, suggesting that only a 'separate peace' was possible. Drawing on this general idea, theorists of liberal international law began to promote a divided notion of sovereignty, where sovereign equality is only granted to those states that are democratically organised and respect human rights. The more radical among these theorists even demanded that those states that do not have a liberal constitution be excluded from international law and deprived of the right to non-intervention (Eberl 2008). In the early 2000s, these ideas also resonated with neoconservative agendas and led to the call for a 'Concert of Democracies' in some policy circles in the US. This kind of liberal club governance was meant to establish an exclusive circle of democracies – based on their internal normative qualities – as decision-makers on a global level (Geis 2013).

In sum, this brand of liberal internationalism sees liberal democracies as empirically more peaceful than other political systems, and protective of political and civil rights, as well as morally reliable, which makes them the 'most advanced historical form of polity' (Reus-Smit 2005, 76). These outstanding qualities of liberal democracies also justify them 'hav[ing] special rights in international society' (Reus-Smit 2005, 76), thereby reintroducing legal hierarchy to the international sphere through the idea of conditional sovereignty reserved only for those states that qualify.

Shared Sovereignty

A last paradigm of sovereignty is what I call shared sovereignty, also known as disaggregated or divided sovereignty (Agnew 2005, 441). Again, from the perspective of the state, this type of sovereignty has an external and an internal side which capture sovereignty transfers from the state to levels above or below it. The latter refers to the subnational level and such concepts as federalism as the prototype of 'shared and negotiated sovereignty' (Rudolph and Rudolph 2010, 556), which, as an ambivalent part of the process of state formation, contrasts with the ideal of absolute state sovereignty. Examples include not only the USA, Germany and the UK, but also India. More recently, the model of autonomous regions that are neither sovereign states nor simple administrative units within a nation-state has gained relevance,

for instance in such contexts as Catalonia, Kosovo, Kashmir or Kurdistan (Mansour 2014).

With regard to the former (sovereignty transfers from the state to levels above), today's international institutions and organisations play a key role in international politics. It has even been argued that contemporary sovereignty 'no longer consists in the freedom of states to act independently . . . but in membership [and] reasonably good standing in the regimes that make up the substance of international life' (A. Chayes and A. H. Chayes 1995, 27). The UN, its ever-evolving system and the development of international law stand out among those institutions that have imposed limits on state sovereignty at a global scale. Notably, some international institutions have introduced 'majority decisions, thus creating the possible condition that states were asked to implement decisions to which they had not necessarily consented' (Zürn and Deitelhoff 2015, 204). While these decisions could eventually require the consent of states, international institutions being a mere tool for the exercise of state authority, the European Union (EU) and concomitant forms of international authority ('delegated' and 'pooled' authority, see Zürn and Deitelhoff 2015, 215) have to be interpreted as embodying actual sovereignty transfer, as supranational institutions can take decisions in those policy fields that are communitarised within the EU without the nation-states' consent.

A whole field of research under the title of multi-level governance has begun investigating these forms of shared or layered sovereignty and overlapping spheres of authority (Piattoni 2010, Kreuder-Sonnen and Zürn 2020). Importantly, while the EU stands out as both an empirical phenomenon and an object of academic investigation, 'integrative regionalism' (Acharya 2002) is a model that exists outside Europe. In the 1970s, it seemed that Europe and its integration in the EU stood in sharp contrast to the disintegration and advancement of the nation-state in the other regions of the world (Haas 1961, 366). Yet, the 1990s came to be known as the era of 'new regionalism' (Acharya 2014, 86). In contrast to 'old regionalism', which had mainly focused on strategic and economic cooperation, 'new regionalism' was marked by its 'comprehensiveness and multidimensional nature' (Acharya 2014, 86) and its autonomous development from within and below, without a hegemon behind the scenes. 'New regionalism' was thus not a mere imitation of the EU – on the contrary, in fact (Acharya 2014, 96–7). What all types of regional-

ism shared, however, was their emphasis on regional identities and the emergence of intrusive regionalism. In contrast to integrative regionalism, this 'is not always based on consent . . . [and has] a coercive element (Acharya 2002, 28) which may be military or political, but is always 'sovereignty-defying' (Acharya 2002, 28). While in some countries, the reluctance to restrict state sovereignty and create supranational bodies initially prevailed, given that these nation-states had only recently gained their full sovereignty, most regions now have models of shared sovereignty. Today, regional institutions can be considered building blocks of a global order with shared sovereignties where 'the traditional distinction between regionalism and universalism [disappears]' (Acharya 2014, 93).

Legitimacy, or the Pattern According to Which Entities Are Ordered

In this section, I will turn to the patterns according to which entities are and should be ordered or how forms of authority can be legitimised. Legitimacy can be divided into a philosophical, a juridical and a sociological dimension (Glaser 2013, 14–29). When inquiring about the conditions under which rule can be considered legitimate, philosophers ask how compatible that rule is with a normative principle that justifies the relationship between rulers and the ruled. A juridical perspective is concerned with whether authority is grounded in existing legal provisions and principles. Finally, the sociological understanding of legitimacy refers to the empirical acceptance of authority or what Weber called 'legitimacy belief' (*Legitimitätsglaube*, Weber 1922, 122). In what follows, I focus on normative conceptions of legitimacy, as this is the relevant dimension when it comes to discursive struggles over what world order should look like.

The normative legitimacy of an institution is often assessed on the basis of how its inputs are organised and what outputs it generates. The former refers to participation in and consent to a form of rule, whereas the latter looks at the effectiveness and responsiveness of institutions and policies. Input legitimacy presupposes some sense of community, collective identity or *demos*. The problem-solving dimension of output-oriented legitimacy looks for mutual benefits and relies on common interests rather than a collective identity (Scharpf 1999, 16–28). The democratic ideal in the nation-state context used to insist that these two dimensions belong together. But this view has come

under pressure in the postnational constellation (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2007, 1–29). Today the normative debate needs to take into account the legitimacy of global governance institutions and decision-making (Peter 2021), which raises new questions about the relationship between political legitimacy, on the one hand, and democracy and justice, on the other, as the two reference ideals most typically employed (Erman 2016). Empirically, IR scholars, too, have argued since the end of the 1990s that 'legitimacy matters to international institutions and to the nature of the international system as a whole' (I. Hurd 1999, 403).

The following reconstruction of four paradigms of legitimacy will therefore take into consideration both the domestic and the international level when asking what is considered legitimate authority. The guiding question is: Why should an institution, procedure or decision be accepted by those concerned? I identify four main sources of legitimacy present in Western discourse: the individual, the community, deliberation and agonism. While these are part of normative political theorising, they can also be used by political actors for legitimacy claims and as good reasons to justify their decisions, claims to power or authority and even use of violence. The following paradigms are to be understood as covering a substantial share of the repertoire of meanings available in Western discourse on legitimacy.

Individual-based Legitimacy

Individual-based approaches to legitimacy are rooted in the tradition of contractualist argumentation, which asserts that the consent of the individual to a state, government or form of rule is the only source of legitimacy. John Rawls's (1993, 1999) political liberalism can be considered paradigmatic for such approaches of methodological and normative individualism today. Setting up a thought experiment in the form of a fictive original position – the famous 'veil of ignorance' behind which individuals do not know what position in society they will end up in – Rawls argues that a just society is the result of rational decisions taken by an individual under such conditions of fairness, and therefore a concept of justice to which everyone can consent, no matter what their respective encompassing beliefs are. For the main challenge in modern societies is the 'fact of a plurality of reasonable but incompatible comprehensive doctrines' (Rawls 2005, xvii).

Rawls proposes two solutions to this challenge. The first is the idea of an overlapping consensus of reasonable comprehensive doctrines that support the idea of 'justice as fairness . . . as a freestanding view that expresses a *political* conception of justice' (Rawls 2005, 144, original emphasis). By virtue of being political, this conception does not presuppose the acceptance of any religious, metaphysical, moral, philosophical or epistemological doctrine. The consensus is stable because it is supported by the different comprehensive doctrines, without, however, depending on any one of them, as the 'constitutional essentials and basic institutions of justice' are grounded in political values (Rawls 2005, 140). Such a purely political foundation is possible because of Rawls's second solution: public reason imposes limits on the arguments that can be made with regard to the basic structure of society. These limits are that any citizen should articulate ideas that are intelligible and comprehensible to other citizens, and they should only give reasons that are within a framework of a political conception of justice (Rawls 2005, 226). Such rationales can generally be accepted as reasonable even if they do not correspond to one's own comprehensive doctrines or beliefs. From this, Rawls derives his 'liberal principle of legitimacy':

> [Our] exercise of political power is proper and hence justifiable only when
> it is exercised in accordance with a constitution the essentials of which all
> citizens may reasonably be expected to endorse in the light of principles and
> ideals acceptable to them as reasonable and rational. (Rawls 2005, 217)

Compared to the domestic context, Rawls's theory of international legitimacy is rather modest. The international political sphere is ideally made up of well-ordered peoples, that is, societies that are 'effectively regulated by a public conception of justice' (Rawls 1999, 4), which need not, however, be the liberal one. Rawls does not argue in favour of an order which would transcend the nation-state or envision some kind of global polity. He does not even draw a teleological picture of an eventual convergence towards liberal societies. For Rawls, an ideal theory of political liberalism applied to the international context has to restrain itself in order to follow its 'own principle of toleration for other reasonable ways of ordering society' (Rawls 2005, 37) and only strives for a thin consensus: a law of peoples with which both liberal and hierarchical well-ordered societies can agree. This theory contains classical provisions

of international law, such as the duty of non-intervention and the principle of *pacta sunt servanda* ('agreements must be kept'), as well as the respect for human rights. Rawls (1999, 36) explicitly follows Kant (1977, 208–13, orig. 1795) in suspecting that 'a world government would either be a global despotism or else would rule over a fragile empire torn by frequent civil strife as various regions and peoples tried to gain their political freedom and autonomy'.

Rawls's disciples, however, followed other trajectories in their liberal conceptions of legitimacy at the global level (Kymlicka 2002, 268–70, Pogge 2002). Such cosmopolitan theories are marked by their individualism, claimed universality and generality (Zürn 2016, 90). As most authors whose legitimacy conceptions are based on the individual also argue in favour of institutional cosmopolitanism (Peter 2021), Rawls's thin law of peoples is the exception rather than the rule. One example of an individual-based institutional cosmopolitanism is Otfried Höffe's subsidiary and federal world republic. Höffe claims that a global polity is necessary because states can no longer fulfil their duties to the individual, the 'only being empirically known as having intrinsic moral value' (Höffe 2007, 215), in an age of globalisation. A 'two-dimensional residual state of nature' (Höffe 2007, 215), among individual states and between individuals and foreign states, must be overcome through a complementary federal world republic. Deriving its power and legitimacy from both 'the community of all human beings and from the community of all states' (Höffe 2007, 219), the republic should be composed of two parliamentary chambers representing both communities. Like other cosmopolitan theories (for example, Held 2006, 305), this model does not aim at abolishing the nation-state but rather at complementing it through institutions at the regional and global level.

Community-based Legitimacy

Compared to individual-based conceptions of legitimacy, community-based approaches[3] are state-based and generally more sceptical about global institutions (Peter 2021). Furthermore, community-based approaches differ from individual-based conceptions in three important respects (Forst 1993, 196–203). First, they assume that a given community is normatively integrated through a common understanding of the good, which varies across different societies (Walzer 1983, 7). Second, based on citizens identifying

with this common good, these approaches advocate participatory forms of organising the political process. Third, they conceptualise citizens as part of a culturally integrated community within which they individualise. As Michael Sandel puts it, the community is constitutive (and therefore antecedent) to the individual:

> Can we view ourselves as independent selves, independent in the sense that our identity is never tied to our aims and attachments? I do not think we can . . . To imagine a person incapable of constitutive attachments . . . is not to conceive an ideally free and rational agent, but to imagine a person wholly without character, without moral depth. (Sandel 1984, 90)

The individual's embeddedness in social relations means that communitarianism replaces liberalism's '(abstract) identity of the isolated self' with 'the (real) identity of the communal self' (F. M. Barnard 2001, 174).

This has consequences for the way in which legitimacy is conceptualised. Michael Walzer (1980, 1998), for example, develops a twofold theory of legitimacy which makes a sharp distinction between the national and the international sphere. As 'the state is constituted by the union of people and government', domestic legitimacy requires 'a certain "fit" between the community and its government' (Walzer 1980, 212). The people must be governed according to their traditions. The government is legitimate only in so far as it 'actually represents the political life of its people' (Walzer 1980, 214), and it is up to the community to judge whether or not it does so. Legitimacy, then, resides in acts or institutions that reflect the normative culture of a given community and arises from collective processes rather than the aggregation of individual acts of consent (Etzioni 2011, 107–9). There is no requirement for arguments and reasons given in the public sphere to be neutral. In contrast to 'antiseptic liberalism', it is the passionate play of identities and communities that is considered 'normal democratic engagement'(Walzer 1998, 300, 303).

For Walzer, international legitimacy needs to be approached in a different manner. As long as the community does not rebel against its government, a state must be considered internationally legitimate. As the only standard for domestic legitimacy is whether a state rules in accordance with the 'opinions of the people, and also their habits, feelings, religious convictions, political culture' (Walzer 1980, 216), any intervention from the outside is rejected. For

this would infringe on the 'respect for communal integrity and for different patterns of cultural and political development' (Walzer 1980, 215). This is also the reason why advocates of community-based approaches to legitimacy are sceptical about any kind of cosmopolitan order and hold that national communities remain the source of legitimacy on a global level (Peter 2021). They also doubt that any universal concept could integrate differences between these communities without creating massive conflict (Bellamy and Castiglione 1998, 157–9). What is more, there is no global *demos* or converging global culture that could legitimise a global polity (Archibugi 2004, 460–1). Nevertheless, some authors have tried to combine communitarian arguments with cosmopolitan approaches (Bellamy and Castiglione 1998) or foregrounded the importance of the regional level, with its regional political identities and communities, as building blocks in (legitimising) global democracy (Gould 2012).

Deliberative Legitimacy

The paradigm of deliberative legitimacy can be considered dominant in the current literature on, as well as the gold standard for, political legitimacy. In democratic theory, deliberative models are often contrasted with and thought of as solving the problems of aggregative democracy. To deliberative theorists, legitimacy resides in the 'deliberative process itself' (Peter 2009, 52), rather than the individual or the community. To be legitimate, any form of authority 'must be based on argumentative justification through public reasoning to those subject to it' (Böker 2017, 23). The basic idea is that 'public deliberation contributes to democratic legitimacy to the extent that it enables citizens to endorse the laws and policies to which they are subject as their own . . . [and thereby] achieve political autonomy or non-domination' (Lafont 2015, 42). Two strategies of building deliberative legitimacy can be identified. Deliberative proceduralism grounds legitimacy in a 'deliberative decision-making process [that] meets some demands of procedural fairness' (Peter 2009, 69) or political equality. Rational deliberative proceduralism, in contrast, insists that there be 'some form of justification of the collective decisions themselves' (Peter 2009, 70) and thereby introduces a standard for the results of deliberation.

Deliberative democracy has become a whole field of study in its own right (see, for example, Bächtiger et al. 2018) but has been fundamentally influ-

enced, if not constituted, by the works of Jürgen Habermas. For Habermas, legitimacy can only be achieved through the discursive rationalisation of the decisions taken by a government and administration for which 'the procedures and communicative presuppositions of democratic opinion- and will-formation function as the most important sluices' (Habermas 1996, 300). By virtue of this ideal process of deliberation and decision-making and 'insofar as the flow of relevant information and its proper handling have not been obstructed' (Habermas 1996, 296), reasonable or fair results can be obtained. Habermas sees the constitutional state as the institutionalisation of complex forms of communication. It allows for an interplay between formal, institutionalised deliberations that are regulated through procedures, deal with problem-solving and lead to will-formation, on the one hand, and an informally formed public opinion that operates anarchically as an agenda-setter, on the other. It is this discursive structure of public deliberation that produces legitimacy of political decisions or, as Seyla Benhabib puts it:

> [Legitimacy] in complex democratic societies must be thought to result from the free and unconstrained public deliberation about matters of common concern. Thus a public sphere of deliberation about matters of mutual concern is essential to the legitimacy of democratic institutions. (Benhabib 1996, 68)

Given that Habermas's approach is premised on a consensus that results from public deliberation, his version of legitimacy has been called rational deliberative perfect proceduralism (Peter 2009, 71). But for the transferability of deliberative legitimacy to a postnational constellation, the consensus condition is a stumbling block. In the face of the loss of sovereignty experienced by the nation-state, and a consequent decline in policy effectiveness, Habermas is sceptical about the introduction of a global polity or 'world state'. Instead, he argues, politics 'has to find a less demanding basis of legitimacy in the organizational forms of an international negotiation system' (Habermas 2001b, 109). But as a '"thick" communicative embeddedness is missing [on the international level]' (Habermas 2001b, 109), he attaches great importance to NGOs that participate in transnational decision-making. Eventually, though, the Habermasian version of deliberative legitimacy reaches its limits in a global context (Fine and Smith 2003).

But not all versions of deliberative legitimacy require such a discursive consensus. Other deliberative theorists have tried to take the model further and show its potential for use at the global level. John Dryzek, for instance, tries to mobilise 'diffuse communication in the public sphere that generates public opinion that can in turn exercise political influence' (Dryzek 2006, 27) for a transnational space. This sort of influence can be exercised through 'communicatively competent decentralized control over the content and relative weight of globally consequential discourses' (Dryzek 2006, 154). And yet, it remains doubtful whether a truly global public sphere can develop, let alone one that meets certain normative standards which could translate into the rationalisation of decision-making – the resurgence of populist politics in many parts of the world is just one development which makes the prospects for deliberative legitimacy beyond the nation-state seem bleak.

Agonistic Legitimacy

The last model of legitimacy is rooted in what came to be known as the 'agonistic model of democratic politics' (Benhabib 1996, 7) or approaches of 'radical democracy' (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). These approaches are all concerned with 'a mysterious phenomenon: the displacement of politics in political theory' (Honig 1993, 2). By focusing on procedures and institutions and narrowing their understanding of politics down to 'juridical, administrative, or regulative tasks' (Honig 1993, 2), political theories tend to displace conflict from its position at the core of politics. As Bonnie Honig argues, out of fear of the disruptive practices and conflictual nature of the political, such theories strive for closure. They try to develop a single model of order under the assumption that 'their favored institutions fit and express the formations of subjects' (Honig 1993, 3). In this way, Honig further contends, those who do not fit are relegated to the margins and contestation is placed outside the political realm.

Starting from the criticism of this depoliticising or even anti-political trait of liberal democracy,[4] Chantal Mouffe develops her agonistic model of democracy. For Mouffe, liberal democracy results from the attempt to combine political liberalism (private autonomy) and popular sovereignty (public autonomy) in one political organisation (Mouffe 1996, 246). It tries to recon-

cile or demonstrate the co-originality (*Gleichursprünglichkeit*) of democratic legitimacy as represented by popular sovereignty (equality) and the exigencies of rationality understood as liberal rights (freedom) through deliberation or public reasoning (Mouffe 2000, 83–4). Deliberative theories of liberal democracy share the belief that the performance of institutions generates a rational consensus that exceeds a mere modus vivendi because it is 'the idealized content of practical rationality' (Mouffe 2000, 86). According to Mouffe, these theories ignore the impossibility of establishing such a 'rational consensus on political decisions without exclusion' (Mouffe 2000, 89). Rather than solving the problem of difference, then, such theories ultimately opt for a 'flight from pluralism' (Mouffe 2000, 90).

In a nutshell, the concern that proponents of agonistic approaches have regarding both individualist and deliberative forms of legitimacy is that these simply relocate difference to areas where it is not considered problematic, that is the private sphere, with the aim of making politics a space of encompassing inclusion in a rational consensus that can be universally justified. Mouffe (2000, 99), in contrast, insists that 'the dimension of antagonism that the pluralism of values entails' cannot be eradicated from political theorising. Rather than aiming at an intellectual, argument-based, almost aseptic consensus which abolishes antagonism, democracy should be able to mobilise passions or, as Honig put it, 'the energy and animation and frankly, the fun, that come from gathering together around issues that are affectively charged'.[5]

Of course, antagonism itself is not democracy – but it is the central feature of what Mouffe calls 'the political'. She contrasts it with 'politics' understood as

> the ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions which seek to establish a certain order and organize human coexistence in conditions that are always potentially conflictual because they are affected by the dimension of 'the political'. (Mouffe 2000, 101)

Politics is the struggle over hegemony, that is, the moment of closure by which, through acts of power, a certain social order is objectified. Such a hegemonic order is always temporary and precarious. Pretending otherwise or seeking final closure would simultaneously kill the political. For Mouffe, the central

question for democratic theory is not the abolition of power or its transformation into authority, but how to make the power play democratic. This can only be achieved by transforming relations of antagonism (that construct the Other as an enemy) into 'agonistic pluralism'. The Other, then, is recognised as a legitimate adversary or as one who has embraced the principles of equality and liberty – but who interprets these in an irreconcilably and insurmountably different way. Democratic politics is no longer democratic when the struggle over social issues takes place between enemies and takes on antagonistic forms. Democratic politics is no longer political when these differences are concealed, abolished or discounted. For Mouffe, this implies that legitimacy is based on 'purely pragmatic grounds' (Mouffe 2000, 100): a hegemonic order is legitimate by virtue of having 'been able to impose itself', which presupposes some degree of acceptance. Legitimacy is thus a question of facts, not norms.

At the global level, advocates of pluralistic agonism are primarily critical of the fact that the neoliberal model of globalisation is the only one available and that there is a lack of legitimate ways to express alternative ideas of a global order beyond practising resistance. This is accompanied by a rejection of any version of political or institutional cosmopolitanism, which would merely constitute the transfer of the Western hegemonic model to the global level. Again, such a consensus, this time of global scale, would eliminate 'the possibility of legitimate dissent, thereby creating a favourable terrain for the emergence of violent forms of antagonisms' (Mouffe 2013, 20). Instead of an 'international Leviathan', Mouffe proposes the 'pluralization of hegemonies . . . [in] a multipolar world' (Mouffe 2013, 20), in which more than one order is considered legitimate. Liberal democracy with its close relationship with human rights and secularism, then, is considered a contingent historical form of political organisation that emerged in the West. Agonistic legitimacy on a global level resides in the coexistence of and encounter 'between a diversity of poles which engage with each other without any one of them having the pretence of being the superior one' (Mouffe 2013, 41). Existing differences between poles are a virtue, for they 'contribute to enhancing the pluralism that characterizes a multipolar world' (Mouffe 2013, 41). Mouffe's conception of a global order demonstrates the extent to which theories of legitimacy are premised and build upon values and goals that order is supposed to bring about.

Teloi, or Why Entities Are Ordered

Orders should help realise some common good or value. They are built with a certain goal in mind – which simultaneously marks the endpoint of a historical narrative justifying this future order. Such *teloi* and the teleological stories contributing to the order in the making, sorting and structuring a past and linking it to a future with a projected desirable or dreaded state of affairs, are what I call utopias and dystopias here: 'The utopian views humanity and its future with either hope or alarm. If viewed with hope, the result is usually a utopia. If viewed with alarm, the result is usually a dystopia' (Sargent 2010, 8). These views are often nostalgic because they idealise a past order which was lost and can either be restored (utopia) or never brought back (dystopia) (Sargent 2010, 26). They therefore always imply a certain understanding or even philosophy of history, a teleological understanding of how events evolve and bring about either a better or a worse society. An understanding of causality (emplotment) is also built into these narratives, as are its protagonists and their antagonists (see Pfeifer and Spencer 2019).

In this chapter, utopia and dystopia are used to describe the fate of and prescribe the cure for the still imperfect world order. They project the world order into a glorious or threatening future, while using the past as both an indicator of and a standard for future developments. They usually contain arguments concerning sovereignty and legitimacy, but relate these to a more comprehensive story of the evolution of the global order. The four teleological stories introduced in this chapter comprise a utopian and a dystopian version, respectively, of universalism and pluralism as values to be achieved through the world order. What they all have in common is their view that the current state of international relations is marked by a pluralism of political orders and values. Where they do not agree, however, is on the evaluation of this state of affairs and their (normative) outlook on future developments.

Liberal Convergence

The first paradigm is an optimist's outlook on liberal universalism. Here, liberal political principles are considered normatively superior to any other doctrine and seen as the most rational form of political organisation, which makes them an almost natural endpoint of history. The best-known version of

this first utopia is the 'end of history' thesis developed by Francis Fukuyama (1989) at the transition from the 'Cold War' era to what came to be known as the decade of liberal euphoria. This historical change, Fukuyama held, left only 'one competitor standing in the ring as an ideology of potentially universal validity: liberal democracy, the doctrine of individual freedom and popular sovereignty' (Fukuyama 1992, 38). While the liberal democratic ideal had already come to perfection in the beginning of the nineteenth century, the collapse of communism marked 'the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government' (Fukuyama 1989, 1). While Fukuyama proclaimed the ideological victory of liberalism, he did not expect real-world conflicts to end or ultimately be solved. Rather, 'the world [would] be divided between a post-historical part, and a part that is still stuck in history' (Fukuyama 1992, 276). The former would be guided by peace, economic prosperity and cooperation; the latter would face conflicts driven by religion or nationalism. No significant interaction would take place between the two worlds until the best of all forms of political organisation eventually materialised everywhere. As Fukuyama put it, the 'great majority of wagons will be making the slow journey into town, and most will eventually arrive there' (Fukuyama 1992, 339).

As this version of liberalism as a 'political vision' (Jahn 2013, 12) illustrates, liberal theorists tend to assume that 'all good things go together' (Sørensen 2007, 373, Bech and Snyder 2011). Liberal democracy is supposedly accompanied by, among others, capitalism and prosperity, human rights, peace and justice. One example of this assumed convergence is the 'Kantian triangle', known from the debate on the democratic peace, that combines the democratic constitution of states with economic interdependence and shared norms in international organisation into a recipe for peaceful international relations (Russett and Oneal 2001). This belief in the co-constitution of the political, economic and normative dimensions of liberalism is rarely made explicit (Jahn 2013, 22–4). And yet it can give rise to simple political formulas which suggest that achieving one liberal good will unleash the other benefits. The democratic peace thesis as an – albeit controversial – empirical finding in academia, for instance, was translated into a political formula that became a justificatory framework for US policies of regime change in the 'Middle East' (Ish-Shalom

2006, 566). The encompassing view of liberalism also establishes a firm link with, and thereby also narrows the possible understanding of, democracy, universalising a 'historically specific understanding of what democracy is and should be, underwritten by a teleological reading of its past that seeks to validate this truth claim' (C. Hobson 2009, 637).

Originally developed for the domestic context, liberal theory pursued different strategies in order to globalise and universalise its scope and values. Beate Jahn identifies three ways of '"domestify[ing]" the international context' (Jahn 2013, 29) to build liberal international theory. The first version prioritises the liberalisation of the units that make up the international system, that is, the democratisation of states. Given the declining importance of the distinction between an international and a domestic sphere, the second version focuses on the constitution of a cosmopolitan society and global polity. The third strategy operates through the analogy between the domestic and the international realms, for instance conceiving of the American hegemon in the international system as the equivalent of the domestic government (Jahn 2013, 29–31). As the introduction to this chapter briefly discussed, proponents of this last version of liberal internationalism do see the American-led liberal hegemonic order as being in crisis. But they attribute this crisis to changing circumstances rather than 'the underlying principles of liberal international order' (Ikenberry 2011, 334).

This first utopia thus builds on the conviction that liberal normative theory offers a comprehensive and coherent ideal the implementation of which is yet to be perfected. Conflicts, tensions and paradoxical effects are blamed on problems with the practice of norms and illiberal forces beyond liberalism, rather than the contradictions of the fragmentary dynamics inherent in it (Jahn 2013, 9–10). The normative achievements of liberalism are enthusiastically embraced and seen as having universal validity. Liberal internationalists are optimists in the sense that they regard history as moving towards liberal convergence, however bumpy the road may be.

Western Hegemony

The second paradigm makes similar empirical assessments as the first but differs in its normative judgements. The paradigm is the dystopian flipside of liberal convergence, criticising liberal hegemony and problematising the liberal use

of force, such as democratic wars (Geis, Müller and Schörnig 2013), as well as deconstructing liberalism's claims to a monopoly on rationality and normative superiority. Many approaches in this paradigm are grounded in a Gramscian tradition and build on his understanding of hegemony as the '"spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group' (Gramsci 1971, 12). Antonio Gramsci distinguishes between civil or private society and the state or political society. Whereas the latter operates through direct domination, the former is the realm of hegemony which carries and supports the political system. For Gramsci, a political revolution would have to be accompanied by proletarian hegemony. In neo-Gramscian approaches, such subaltern social groups have often been conceptualised as counterhegemonic, as a challenge 'to an order *already constituted*' (Pasha 2005, 547, original emphasis), but the creation of a 'constitutive outside' is an integral part of the formation of hegemony, as the discussion on the Muslim Other in Chapter 1 demonstrated.

With regard to world order, these conceptual distinctions are important because hegemony is not simply domination of the global order by one state, nor is it a synonym for imperialism. In order for it 'to become hegemonic, a state would have to found and protect a world order which was universal in conception, i.e. . . . an order which most other states . . . could find compatible with their interests' (Cox 1983, 171). Thus, hegemony on a global level emerges when an already established hegemony at the national level acquires international scope through the expansion of 'economic and social institutions, the culture, the technology' (Cox 1983, 171), as determined by the dominant social class. A Gramscian reading would explain

> global tensions between a West-centred liberal order and its assumed antithesis in much of the Third World (particularly the Islamic World) . . . not simply in material terms, nor as a cultural clash, but as the cumulative effect of a culturally partitioned world of privilege and unity, want and fragmentation. (Pasha 2005, 553–4)

While there are works that critically refer to actors as hegemons, more specifically the US as the only remaining superpower (see, for example, Habermas 2004), most approaches are concerned with the structural side of hegemony. Edward Said ([1978] 2003) emphasises the intimate connection between

power over and knowledge of the Orient, which makes Western hegemony both stable and subtle.[6] Hegemony or 'cultural leadership' can be challenged through postcolonialism (which detects colonial practices in new guises) and postmodernism (which questions the universalisability of both moral claims and the legitimation of political orders) on the level of knowledge production (Said [1978] 2003, 7, 350–1). Mouffe sees the globalisation of the neoliberal economic model as problematic to the extent that any arguments from the critical left are drawn into and have to argue within the logic of neoliberalism (Mouffe 2000, 118–19).

In their book *Empire* (2000), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri do not even posit an identifiable hegemon at the centre of the world order, but rather argue that there is a fundamental power shift in the establishment of a new sovereignty without spatial and temporal boundaries. Empire, a totalising management network that is, at the same time, 'a *decentred* and *deterritorializing* apparatus of rule' (Hardt and Negri 2000, xii, original emphasis) is the result of a world market that strives for the instantiation of 'a properly capitalist order' (Hardt and Negri 2000, 9). It does not operate from a centre, but through biopolitics as a 'form of power that regulates social life from its interior . . . [or] as a control that extends throughout the depths of the consciousnesses and bodies of the population' (Hardt and Negri 2000, 23). In this totalising and all-consuming Empire, resistance can only come from the inside: the 'creative forces of the multitude that sustain Empire are also capable of autonomously constructing a counter-Empire . . . that will one day take us through and beyond Empire' (Hardt and Negri 2000, xv). 'Counter-hegemonic struggles', as can be observed in what is often called the global periphery, for instance, are already an indicator of the absence of hegemony and the necessity of dominance (Pasha 2005, 555). In this sense, the dystopian take on Western hegemony sees liberalism's universalising logic as threatening and totalising. It deconstructs the normality of Western modernity and points to the existence of multiple pathways to and manifestations of modernity (Eisenstadt 2000a). While Western hegemony is relatively stable, not least because its workings are often invisible and intangible, its critics nonetheless call for forms of political and academic resistance and counterhegemonic practices.

Pluriverse

In contrast, proponents of the pluriverse believe that Western dominance is in its endgame – and that this is a development to be welcomed. They contrast what is perceived as a normatively flawed monocivilisational model with a pluralism of civilisations. While the term 'civilisations' is notorious for implying colonial superiority, it can be observed 'that nonstate actors, states, and international organizations are increasingly talking and acting *as if* civilizations . . . exist and . . . relations between them mattered in world politics' (Bettiza 2014, 2, original emphasis). A strand of world order research has therefore reclaimed the term, stripping it from the 'liberal presumption that universalistic secular liberal norms are inherently superior to all others' (Katzenstein 2010, 2) and constructing it, from the outset, in the plural – that is, as a plurality of civilisations or imagined civilisational communities, depending on the ontological status ascribed to civilisations.

As civilisations become the object and unit of analysis, their interactions in the form of 'transcivilizational engagements, intercivilizational encounters, and civilizational conflicts' come into view (Katzenstein 2010, 8) and ethical programmes can be designed with the aim of transforming them (Bettiza 2014). One example is the notion of a 'dialogue of civilisations'. This is proposed as an antidote to and serves as a counterdiscourse against the clash of civilisations, which is seen 'as a dangerous possibility . . . resulting from wrong policies that need to be opposed' (Petito 2009, 49). The underlying demand is for the normative structure of the world order to be renegotiated. The premise for finding a universal order that is truly worthy of the name is to recognise the plurality of cultures and civilisations, as well as to allow them to participate in building it. In this way, instead of imposing a 'Western-centric and liberal global order[,] . . . a multicultural and peaceful world order' can be constructed (Petito 2009, 51). As Fred Dallmayr (2009, 30, 37) put it, the monologue as a mode of communication through which 'a hegemonic or imperial power reduces all other agents to irrelevance and silence' needs to be replaced by what he calls 'ethical-hermeneutical dialogue' which would 'render concrete life-worlds mutually accessible as a touchstone of ethical sensibility'.

An obvious question to be asked of these normative approaches is how they take power relations into account (Dallmayr 2009, 38). Authors

emphasise that, in contrast to the conventional wisdom provided by neo-realism, multipolarity should be considered an opportunity for a peaceful world order rather than a threat to stability (Petito 2009, 52–5). Some make the case that a plurality of political orders, embedded in a 'dialogically constituted normative order' (Petito 2009, 62), provides better prospects for stable and peaceful global relations than other orders. Mouffe, for instance, advocates a 'pluralisation of hegemonies . . . organised around several big regional units with their different cultures and values' (Mouffe 2009, 553). Not only does this preserve the possibility for legitimate opposition and agonistic forms of politics within the world order, as discussed in the section on agonistic legitimacy above, but it also allows for a decoupling of the democratic ideal and liberalism, and makes culturally imprinted forms of democracy in regional orders conceivable. In such a pluriverse, Mouffe goes on to argue, 'diversity of political forms of organisation will be more conducive to peace and stability than the enforcement of a universal model' (Mouffe 2009, 561).

An empirical anchor for these normative considerations can be found in the debate on new regionalism and, more specifically, in what Amitav Acharya (2014) calls the regional world perspective. The growing number and functions of regional institutions, as well as the importance of interregionalism, point to this alternative multiplex world order in which 'regions are becoming crucial sites of conflict and cooperation in world politics' (Acharya 2014, 118). This order is different from the multipolar world prior to World War II in terms of the multiplicity of actors, the density and scope of both economic interdependence and regional and international institutions, and the complexity of conflicts which have replaced the 'traditional challenge to world order, interstate conflict' (Acharya 2017, 277). The multiplex order is also 'not a singular global order, liberal or otherwise, but a complex of crosscutting, if not competing, international orders and globalisms' (Acharya 2017, 277). The pluriverse is thus the utopian version of a world composed of a plurality of civilisations and/or regions. The latter serve as building blocks in or can even become an alternative to the architecture of global institutions (Hurrell 2007, 247–61). Pluralism and the coexistence of competing political orders are considered conducive to peace and more inclusive global politics, rather than a source of instability or conflict.

Clash of Civilisations

The final teleology shares the previous paradigm's concern with cultural difference and the division of the world into civilisations without, however, seeing this state of affairs as benign. The approaches in this paradigm either posit an essentialised understanding of identities and predict that civilisational encounters will lead to virtually unavoidable clashes, or they claim that identities do not matter at all. In the latter case, the anarchical structure of the international system combined with multipolarity is marked by instability and is prone to violent conflict. Both versions of the clash-of-civilisations dystopia view international relations as having a conflictual nature.

A case of this paradigm par excellence, infamous though it may be, is Samuel P. Huntington's thought. For him, the 'fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future' and the 'clash of civilizations will dominate global politics' (Huntington 1993, 22). The process of modernisation, Huntington claims, will lead to a weakening of the nation-state as a source of identity, which will strengthen religious identities that unite civilisations. Religion is the most important dividing factor between civilisations and it makes civilisational identities particularly resistant to change. As interactions between civilisations intensify, the awareness of civilisational difference increases and civilisational conflict, as the most violent form, erupts. Huntington sees the primary fault line as residing between the 'West and the rest' (Huntington 1993, 39). Western dominance and claims to the universality of Western values, on the one hand, and the minimal resonance these ideas find in other cultures, on the other, stir up this type of conflict, the most dangerous being the one between the West and what he calls the 'Confucian-Islamic military connection' (Huntington 1993, 47).

To Huntington, the 'differences between civilizations are real and important . . . [and] will supplant ideological and other forms of conflict as the dominant global form of conflict' (Huntington 1993, 48). Similar argumentations are put forward by cultural and area specialists whose works on the history and characteristics of civilisations partly inspired Huntington's theses. These include figures such as the Orientalist Bernard Lewis, who originally coined the idea of a 'clash of civilisations' (Lewis 1990, 55–60). To these authors, civilisations have a recognisable essence that is neither easily changeable nor

reconcilable with other civilisations, and that is the root cause of severe, intractable conflicts. In Peter Katzenstein's interpretation, Huntington's approach is an adapted version of realism which replaces the nation-state with civilisation as a 'kind of mega nation-state' (Katzenstein 2010, 8) but keeps the idea of a purely anarchical international system. A world society, let alone a global community, is inconceivable in such an account of civilisations. Huntington also seems to deny the existence of a common background culture in which civilisational conflicts are embedded in the first place. This makes it hard to explain how constant civilisational identities can lead to both peaceful encounters and conflict. Understanding civilisations as constructs that may be reified and become primordial at a certain point in time, which may but do not have to lead to conflict, might be a way to think about civilisational conflict more academically (Katzenstein 2010, 12).

Approaches that do not attach any importance to identity eventually make similar arguments about the inevitable conflict-proneness of the international system. Rather than the incompatibility of cultural features, however, they identify 'unbalanced multipolarity' (Mearsheimer 2001, 130) as the cause of conflict. Similar to the Western hegemony paradigm, these approaches view unipolar international systems as unstable and merely as a transitional state from a bipolar to a multipolar system (Layne 1993). They predict the decline of the American world order, as well as a conflictual process towards the establishment of a conflict-prone multipolar system (Kagan 2012). The dystopia of a clash of civilisations thus predicts the demise of the unipolar world order and its replacement by a multipolar system prone to conflict, due to either the logics of balancing or insurmountable cultural differences.

Studying how Islamists Relate to Western World Order Discourse

The three sections that presented the four paradigms of sovereignty, legitimacy and *teloi* span the Western world order discourse as represented in academic debate. Admittedly, as this is not the result of a discourse analysis in its own right, I do not claim to have captured all strands, to be in a position to weigh the various argumentative paradigms against each other or to have delineated the subtleties and inner workings of any of the three discursive fields. Rather, the discursive space sketched out in the sections and summarised in Table 2.1 should be read as an approximation of the plural, multivocal,

Table 2.1 Western world order discourses

	Sovereignty	Legitimacy	*Teloi*
1	Absolute	Individual-based	Liberal convergence
2	Popular	Community-based	Western hegemony
3	Conditional	Deliberative	Pluriverse
4	Shared	Agonistic	Clash of civilisations

sometimes contradictory nature of 'the' Western world order. This approximation fulfils three methodological functions. First, it is meant to counter the imaginary of a unitary Western world order or a consensus on its meaning. Second, if the approximation is plausible enough, it becomes possible to operationalise the notion that a specific discourse or actor is radically different from or indeed the ultimate Other of the Western world order. This would mean that there is no overlap between the Western discursive space and the discourse under investigation whatsoever. Finally, this allows for an empirical investigation of the relationship between a de-essentialised Western and any other world order discourse and an appraisal of grades and shades of difference and identity. In this book, the discursive strategies of two Islamist actors will be scrutinised in this way. However, in principle, any actor's communication could be subjected to such an analysis, including Western parties or states that would end up at a rather specific point in the discursive space spanned by the three axes of sovereignty, legitimacy and *teloi*.

How, then, should such an empirical investigation proceed? First, in terms of material, natural data – that is, data produced by the actors under investigation themselves and documenting 'discursive encounters' (Hansen 2006, 76) or, possibly, a 'clash of discourses' (Dryzek 2006, 155) – is preferred to data produced by the researcher, such as interviews. Typically, such data includes oral or written communications, but also videos and other visuals, websites and online posts, and so on. What specific artefacts and modes of communication are analysed depends on the actor's communicative preferences. The documents should also address or at least be accessible to an international and transnational audience, the 'fellow constructors' of world order or the global discursive space in which the actor under investigation struggles with others over meaning. This reduces useful data to elite utterances deliber-

ately disseminated by the actors themselves beyond their local communities or constituencies.

Second, given the interest in relating specific discourses to a larger discursive space referred to as the Western world order, the analysis proceeds both deductively and inductively. In order to combine these two strategies, to proceed as systematically as possible and to process large quantities of text, the empirical study in this book employed a qualitative content analysis (QCA) using the version developed by Margit Schreier (2012) and, as a concrete analytical instrument, put it into the service of the discourse analytical methodology (see also Schreier 2012, 49). The deductive part concerns, on the one hand, the specification of discursive fields, operationalised as main categories (Schreier 2012, 59–78), which are identified as constitutive of a world order discourse – but could have been selected differently. On the other hand, the four paradigmatic arguments identified in Western discourse for each of the fields are a deductive starting point which serves as the standard from which the discourse subjected to empirical analysis may deviate to a greater or lesser extent. In the terminology of QCA, these strandsof discourse represent deductive categories which, in the course of the analysis, are inductively modified, completed or dropped. Critics may object that such an empirical strategy reproduces Western categories – and it is precisely this point the approach in this book capitalises on. My argumentation starts from a multifaceted yet hegemonic Western discourse to which any other articulation of world order has to relate. Over the course of the analysis, it will become visible whether, how and to what extent this hegemonic discourse is reproduced, modified and transcended by the two Islamist groups under investigation here.

QCA also makes it possible to quantitatively assess the importance of certain themes and tropes, and to track changes in discourse over time. We should treat this type of 'measuring' with care or even a healthy dose of suspicion, as the most important and accepted, almost self-evident, pieces of knowledge, concepts and arguments are precisely those that do not have to be mentioned anymore. This is why the frequency of certain coded categories is more a proxy for the need to establish certain (moral or truth) claims or framings – and, thus, also an indicator of the level of contestation of a theme or trope rather than its absolute importance in the discursive construction of world order.

Besides equating the frequency of a code or category with importance, another risk we face when conducting QCA is being too rigid in 'forcing' the deductive coding frame on the empirical material. We must take care that the analysis is open enough for conceptions of sovereignty, legitimacy and teleologies that go beyond or are located outside the discursive space outlined in this chapter, that is, open for discursive innovation. This requires text sensitivity and contextualisation.

This is why, third, the discourse analytical posture should be maintained throughout and additional steps of analysis, firmly rooted in the epistemological and methodological frame of this book, are necessary. As Chapters 1 and 2 clarified, discourse is understood as a knowledge–power nexus and the focus is on agents (rather than structures) who try to find discursive strategies to 'impose their view of reality' (Holzscheiter 2014, 151) rather than striving for consensus through conviction and the better argument. This does not mean, however, that we should deny the structural side of discourse, which creates the (unequal) positions that speakers can adopt in the first place. But the core empirical interest is to understand how actors construct world order in and through discourse, purposefully (when they explicitly try to offer alternative interpretations), provocatively (when they transgress what are considered the boundaries of Western world order discourse) or unconsciously (when they discursively reproduce certain arguments or do not feel inclined to address a particular aspect of order). This book sees agents (here: Islamist actors) 'as the authors of narratives and, consequently, as active and deliberative constructors of social reality' (Holzscheiter 2014, 153).

In order to do justice to the social, temporal and spatial situatedness of these actors, a thorough analysis of the proximate and distal context of the texts examined (Phillips and Hardy 2002, 18–38) and an investigation of the constructions of the Self and the Other (or rather, mulitple Selves and more or less different Others; Hansen 2006, 33–48) are useful additional steps. Proximate context refers to the circumstances in which a specific text is produced, such as the situation of interaction or occasion, or the specific discourse practices. Concretely, this comprises the production, dissemination and consumption of a text, but also intertextuality and interdiscursivity (Bergström, Ekström and Boréus 2017, 222–4). Besides a detailed description of the material analysed and the audiences addressed by the texts, as well as the material

that the actor under investigation produces that is not directly subjected to analysis, such a contextualisation requires reflection on what biases and blind spots these discursive practices imply, including an interpretation of what (may have) remained unarticulated and for what reasons (opportunistic, commonsensical, strategic etc.). A variety of data can help with this contextualisation, including participant observation of speech events, (expert) interviews, focus groups with target communities or online ethnography of audiences. Distal context refers to the broader social context, such as the social, ethnic and regional allegiances of discourse participants or their institutional context or social practices. The analysis of the distal context requires reflecting on the order of discourse – does a text reproduce or challenge hegemonic discourses, does it have an effect on power relations, and so on (Lindekilde 2015, 204–6)? In this book, the most important distal context is the Western world order discourse and how the discourses of the two actors are related to this in terms of recognition and resistance. In a narrower sense, distal context also refers to the order of regional and local discourse in which the text analysis has to be embedded. For this purpose, secondary literature, newspapers and possibly interviews with the actors themselves, as well as with experts or political competitors, can be analysed. In this book, a thorough analysis of secondary literature, observations from field visits and interviews that I conducted between 2014 and 2017 with important figures in the parties analysed as well as experts on the two groups (in Lebanon and Tunisia) were used to investigate proximate and distal context.

Scrutinising constructions of the Self and the Other is important not only because, as argued here and in the previous chapter, any discourse on order comes with a proviso on who is (not) and can(not) be included in it, as well as a notion of what this order is meant to overcome and against whom it is positioned. It also facilitates an understanding of the position and point of view from which an actor formulates their contributions to the global discourse on world order. An actor's construction of and self-positioning within a 'web of identities' (Hansen 2006, 40) may involve identities that cut across those produced by hegemonic discourse and may be an entry point for recasting both reified conflict lines and ways of thinking about world order. The construction of identity does not usually involve 'a single Self–Other dichotomy but a series of related yet slightly different juxtapositions that can be theorized

as constituting processes of linking and differentiation' (Hansen 2006, 37). Selves are not always unequivocal, Others not always radically different; one side may reproduce or construct enmities in less antagonistic terms than the other. Such constructions of identity and difference are best analysed by coding the primary material in a way that preserves the original wording, then by looking at how linking and juxtaposing creates relationships of sameness and difference. Again, tacit agreement on certain identity constructions may lead to these no longer being articulated at all. Dimensions to be considered in the analysis of Selves and Others are spatiality (boundary-drawing), temporality (for example, potential for transformation or stasis) and ethicality (morality, responsibility) in relation to identity (Hansen 2006, 42–5).

While the empirical parts of this book (Chapters 4–6) will demonstrate how Ennahda and Hezbollah discursively construct Selves and Others, identity and difference, in their respective environments, the next chapter reflects on what it means to interpret these two parties as Selves in a study on a global world order discourse on unequal footing. Who are these speakers and from what position in their domestic, regional and global context do they articulate their conceptions of world order? What is their history, whom do they (claim to) represent and to whom are their utterances addressed?

Notes

1. As Wojczewski (2018, 8–9) argues, hegemonic discourse is also 'increasingly struggling to fix meanings and identities and thus to reproduce a particular representation of world order because of a shift in self–other relationships'.
2. For instance, I do not explicitly consider economic orders but rather focus on political ones. Economic aspects do, however, play a role in conceptions of legitimacy, as the empirical part of the book will show.
3. Given that the authors quoted 'never did identify themselves with the communitarian movement' (Bell 2023), I will refrain from using the label 'communitarianism' here.
4. Mouffe claims that the basic idea of deliberation 'has accompanied democracy since its birth in fifth-century [BCE] Athens' but explains that it has experienced a revival with Rawls's theory of justice as the birth hour of 'a new wave of normative political theory', which is described as a 'deliberative model', as opposed to the previously dominant aggregative model (Mouffe 2000, 81–2). Therefore, while acknowledging the differences in their theories, Mouffe considers the concepts of

liberal democracy developed by Rawls and Habermas and their respective disciples to belong to the same family of deliberative political theories.

5. https://blog.politics.ox.ac.uk/the-optimistic-agonist-an-interview-with-bonnie-honig/ (accessed 10 October 2023).

6. Most scholars propose a Foucauldian reading of Said, but, increasingly, authors are also identifying the Gramscian legacies in Orientalism (see, for example, Vandeviver 2019). Said himself mentions both authors.