FROM REVELATION TO REVOLUTION: MUHAMMAD'S DEPLOYMENT OF STRATEGIC SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION IN TRANSFORMING THE IDEATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE ARABIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM - 570 AD

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ABSTRACT

There has been relatively little study of system change among scholars of international relations. Several academics have referred to the subject as the "evaded dimension" of IR. The reasons for the omission are complex but include a normative inclination to model stability during the dangerous years of the Cold War and the related preeminence of political realism as the primary theoretical lens of IR analysis. Much of the research work since the Second World War used a technically suitable but distinctly Westphalian template for examining the international system. This approach was perhaps useful for understanding contemporary western IR but may have provided a skewed data set from which scholars could investigate the dynamics of system change.

With the Cold War over and the field in the midst of an intellectual expansion, and in the spirit of those scholars who recently called for an IR approach that isn't "owned and operated by Europe" (referring specifically to Security Communities), this study seeks to suggest an alternerative historical model of system change - one based less upon the explanatory utility of force or interest, but of ideas. Using the "constructivist" lens of analysis, this paper seeks to show how the founder of the Islamic faith, the Prophet Muhammad, used what we recognize today as "strategic social construction" to subvert key social institutions of the tribal-state system of Arabia in 570 AD. His phased efforts at deploying new normative arrangements steadily eroded the structure of ideas on which the system depended. As the "mutual constitution" of personal and system identification began to collapse, a new structure arose based upon reconfigured identities among a new super-tribe of Muslims, the *Umma*.

This case study provides an insight into a period of history many in the west conventionally view as a violent conquest. This alternative ideational explanation is possibly a useful counterpoint, as well as a supplement to existing historical data on system change. Finally, there are modern, real-world applications that are briefly discussed at the conclusion.

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On a personal level, I'm indebted beyond words to my partner and the love of my life, Dr. Afsaneh Oliver, and to my silly, brilliant, and beloved daughter, Jozi. They both spent many hours alone while I reviewed some tedious manuscript, typed a few pages, or simply fretted in existential angst. To my mother Linda and my father Craig: I'm so thankful for your creative characters and probing minds which have shaped my outlook and approach to life.

Finally, I live in eternal gratitude for having been enabled to recognize and serve the cause of Baha'u'llah. It is to He and to God that I dedicate this meager little whimsy, written in the faint hope of making some tiny contribution towards the birth of a more joyous, just and united global community: "Earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0/MUHAMMAD AND THE REVOLUTIONARY POWER OF BELIEFS

Over 1400 years have passed since the Prophet Muhammad[1] first revealed the teachings of Islam to the people of Mecca, a religious center and trading city in the Hijaz region of western Arabia. The result was, in the words of one scholar, an "explosion."[2] In slightly more than two decades -from 610 to 632 AD- Islam swept away centuries of tribal tradition and constructed a united polity of believers from the raw social material of a war-torn backwater. The ideas taught by the Prophet transformed the ancient normative foundations of legitimacy on which the people of the Hijaz had constructed their identities, defined their interests, and organized politically. As one scholar writes, "[Muhammad] created the conditions for a universal brotherhood on the basis of faith, a principle which he vigorously substituted for the old blood-ties and tribal loyalties of the Arabs."[3] Shortly after Muhammad's death, the new believers pushed outwards from their desert base, infusing the core ideas of Islam into the political, social, and religious fabric of much of the known world.

The shockwaves from these days reverberate in our own era. Yet political scientists have mostly ignored the mechanisms of Muhammad's revolution. While Islam has received intense attention post-9/11, the Faith is often portrayed in strictly ideological terms - as a rhetorical cover for actors seeking political ends.[4] Moreover, arguments still appear suggesting Islam is merely an historical artifact lingering among populations whose resistance to modernity demands attention from development experts and security technocrats.[5] And finally, considerable public and expert

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1   For consistency in transliterations (except where quoting directly from a source, in which case I transcribe the original spelling) I've adopted the styles of Prof. Ira Lapidus in *A History of Islamic Societies*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). His usage is current and based on relatively common usage (with the exception of "Usama" for "Osama"). Nonetheless, my choice is rather random and not an endorsement of Lapidus' scholarship.
2   Patricia Crone, *Slaves On Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Malta: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 4.
3   Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 25.
4   For an excellent discussion of this problem see Daniel Philpott, "The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism In International Relations," *World Politics* 55 (October 2002): Especially pages 66-8.
5   Edward Said dissects this strain of thought in *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the*

opinion remains tied to the myth of Islam as a religion of violence that was "spread by the sword."[6] In particular, it's against this last bit of conventional wisdom[7] that I put forward an ideational explanation for the system change that occurred in the Arabian Hijaz.

1.1/MY ARGUMENT: IDEAS TRANSFORMED THE TRIBAL SYSTEM - 632 AD.

If, as I claim, the blunt use of force is causally insufficient to describe the formative period of Islam, how can I better explain the changes Muhammad brought to the Arabian peninsula? Drawing on the work of scholars using the constructivist method[8] of studying international relations, I argue that Muhammad acted in the role of a "norm entrepreneur"[9], strategically introducing normative ideas about political legitimacy into the structured distribution of ideas governing the social makeup of the international system of inner Arabia, a region also known as the Hijaz (I subsequently use the two terms interchangeably). These ideas were widely adopted until the Hijaz was socially and politically transformed.

As we'll see, systemic norms delineating the terms of actor legitimacy form a kind of

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Rest of the World, (New York: Vintage Books,1997). He excoriates authors such as Samuel Huntington for "irrational" views of the diverse Islamic world, writing "To demonize and dehumanize a whole culture on the grounds that it is 'enraged' at modernity is to turn Muslims into the objects of a therapeutic, punitive attention." xxxv-xxxvi.

6   For current samples see http://www.thereligionofpeace.com/pages/history.htm, http://answering-islam.org/Green/spread.htm and http://www.danielpipes.org.

7   The former Pope Benedict reinforced this notion in his 2006 speech to German scholars quoting Byzantine emperor Paleologus: "Show me just what Mohammad brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached." Http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg_en.html.

8   Katzenstein, among others, says constructivism cannot rightly be called a fully constituted ("paradigmatic") theory. He argues that both constructivist and rationalist methods are really "content-less analytical languages" lacking a "moral dimension." "Peter Katzenstein on anti-Americanism, Analytical Eclecticism and Regional Powers." *Theory Talks.* August 29, 2008. http://www.theory-talks.org/2008/08/theory-talk-15.html.
      Katzenstein seems to be referring to moral claims (such as "impel us to action") that are endogenous to the theory. So, for instance, some view political realism as both an analytical *and* prescriptive tool -promoting policies of interest-maximizing behaviour among states as a matter of prudence in a dangerous world. Marxism, in the same way, is described as both an analysis and critique of the operations of global capital (a view shared by Katzenstein).
      Still, Katzenstein's understanding of constructivism on these grounds seems peculiar considering the often expressed view that constructivists are preoccupied with promoting 'good ideas' in the world. Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink. "Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics". *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (June 2001): 403. Wendt builds a subtle but clear "progressive" orientation into his theory, at one point writing, "If there are any structural changes, they will be historically progressive." Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 312. For a critique of the alleged pro-liberal bias among constructivists, see Laura K. Landolt, "(Mis)constructing the Third World? Constructivist Analysis of Norm Diffusion," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (2004): pp. 580-1.

9   Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (Autumn 1998): 897.

'master norm' at the core of the structure of ideas governing an international system. Mlada Bukovansky writes: "Legitimacy is that realm of discourse articulating who has the right to rule and for what reasons. It is necessary to almost all political authority and thus to political power. Actor identities are shaped by principles of political legitimacy, and those principles help shape interaction among actors."[10]

Constructivists believe norm-driven behaviours and the ideational structures channeling them are in a simultaneous and ongoing process of shared (re)formation, known as "mutual constitution". Therefore, as actors in the Hijaz widely adopted and internalized the normative changes of Islam, the region's ideational structure was altered. This led to a new structure in which the *umma* (or community) of Muslims supplanted the former system of sovereign tribes as the legitimate source of authority. As a practical strategy, Muhammad accomplished this feat by subverting several key systemic social institutions serving as mediating mechanisms in the social system. By altering these institutions, Muhammad rapidly diffused the new norms of Islamic legitimacy. Ultimately, the tribal basis of the system was unable to sustain itself and collapsed.

I adopt for this argument the null hypothesis of Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane from their early work on the role of ideas in international life: "[T]he null hypothesis is that the actions described can best be understood on the basis of egoistic interests in the context of power realities: that variations of interests are not accounted for by variations in the character of the ideas that people have."[11]

The structure of this thesis

In the remaining portion of this introductory chapter I will summarize the details of

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10 Mlada Bukovansky, "The Altered States and the State of Nature–The French Revolution and International Politics" *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 2 (April 1999): 198.

11 Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework" in *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change*. eds. Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993): 27. This statement is somewhat problematic. Constructivists believe power and ideas are not separate phenomena but instead interplay in the social structures of human relationships. In this reckoning, "power" lacks significance until given social meaning through the relations between actors.

Muhammad's life and then address a few methodological issues. These include: a review of the relevant tenets of constructivist analysis, my reasons for viewing this historical period as useful for modern IR research, delineating the parameters I'll use to describe the political system of Muhammad's time, describing my historical source material, and offering a brief reflection on the nature of Muhammad's revolutionary ideas.

Chapter Two is devoted to a brief survey of the research and attitudes towards theories of international system change in IR scholarship. My intention is partly to explain why I believe this thesis (and constructivist theory) can be viewed as part of a broader trend towards a particular sort of re-engagement with historical inquiry.

Chapter Three is my substantive argument. The history in this chapter is explicated in a fashion suggested by John Ruggie called The Narrative Explanatory Protocol (NEP).[12] Instead of the "'one damn fact after another'" method of delivering history, the NEP takes a thematic approach. While the overall narrative is loosely structured according to the broad timeline of historical events, issues are discussed as they arise and thus utilize all relevant details of history which help make a particular point at that moment in the argument.

My conclusion in Chapter Four links the past to the present and attempts to show how the constructivist nature of the struggle fought by the Muslims in the 6th century is again being waged in our own era.

Muhammad and the spread of Islam

Muhammad ibn Abdullah was born in 570 AD in Mecca, the principal city among an 'international' system composed of settled and nomadic tribal-based polities in the isolated Hijaz. Muhammad managed a trading company running caravans along the north-south routes to Syria and Yemen. In 610 AD, a vision commanded Muhammad to 'recite' (preach) the verses from God

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12 John Gerard Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Organization* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 94.

that would henceforth be sent down upon him. These verses were later collected in the Quran ('the recitation'). In the following years, Muhammad's monotheistic message rejected the dominant polytheistic beliefs of his region and summoned his people to a dual obligation: recognition and acceptance of himself as enunciator of a novel revelation from God, followed by the adoption of newly-revealed institutions of worship and community life in which "becoming a Muslim meant joining a community whose God-given law overrode tribal loyalties."[13]

The leaders of Mecca, the hegemonic power in the region, viewed Muhammad's message as a revolutionary challenge to their authority and an existential threat to the foundations of the existing system. In 622, Muhammad and his band of followers were forced into exile. They accepted sanctuary from nearby Medina, a city wracked by civil war and desperate for a peacemaker. This move is known as the *hijra*, or emigration, and marks year 1 on the Muslim calendar. Thereafter, Muhammad used Medina as a base from which to bring Arabia into Islam.

Although some ascribe the victory of Islam to Muhammad's military successes, the actual record may belie this claim: Muhammad suffered defeat in one major battle (at "Uhud") and narrowly avoided annihilation in another (at "The Trench"); he was repeatedly betrayed; he lost key followers after being deceived twice by the same trick; the Muslims failed to capture the region's third major city (Ta'if); and he acquiesced to a treaty in which he surrendered his claim to prophet-hood. While it's true that Muslim forces had one early success against Mecca, a subsequent defeat in a 'grudge match' was viewed by the Meccans as equaling the score.[14]

Despite their material superiority, the Meccans could not achieve a decisive victory. Bands of Muslim raiders kept up attacks on Meccan interests and a steady stream of defectors to Islam thinned the ranks of Mecca and its allies. The war ended in the negotiated surrender of Mecca in 630. Shortly afterward, all of Arabia lay under the control of Islam. Muhammad died

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13 Edward Mortimer, *Faith and Power* (New York: Random House, 1982), 34.
14 Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Rochester: Inner Traditions International., 1983), 186.

in 632.

1.2/THE VALUE OF THIS MODEL IN THE STUDY OF IR

This thesis is not uniquely about Islam, although I suggest in the conclusion that the case-study has relevance to the global encounter with Islamist fundamentalism. In the same way, while this thesis doesn't concern religion *per se,* I view my argument as having contemporary significance in showing religion as an effective organizing mechanism for turning belief into united social action.

Overall, I'm mindful of Kal Holsti's remark on the nature of IR study: "I am interested in international relations more than philosophy. We are here because we are interested in a [particular] field of human *activity.*"[15] In this spirit, the story of Muhammad's revolution is valuable because there are few case-studies examining the role of ideas in the transformation of international systems.[16] The study of Islam's early years also has a practical utility insofar as the historical records are, as one scholar affirms, "abundant"[17]and support a variety of analytical interpretations.

In addition, religion has gone mostly unexamined as a serious force for political change in international relations. Religious ideas are often described as an interesting configuration of discourse but mostly irrelevant from an explanatory point of view.[18] At other times, religious beliefs are described in a neoliberal fashion, providing actors with options for achieving needs and/or helping actors to cooperate but otherwise having little substantive influence on the *constitutive content* of goals, which are assumed ultimately to serve self-interested aims of

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15 Adam Jones, "Interview with Kal Holsti," *Review of International Studies* 28, no.3 (July 2002): 5. Italics in original. I take a small liberty with Holsti's limitation by focusing on state-*like* units in my case-study.
16 Mlada Bukovansky, *Legitimacy and Power Politics: The American and French Revolutions in International Political Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 226.
17 Ira M. Lapidus, *A History...*, 18.
18 For instance, although he doesn't mention "religion" as such, Kenneth Waltz shrugs off any role for beliefs in explaining international behaviour. See: Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 66-7.

"utility maximization."[19]

Finally, the lessons of this case-study are being strategically and discursively replayed by actors in our own time. Ancient ideas and beliefs cross through the centuries as 'trans-historical norms' (norms defined as "collective expectations for the proper behaviour of actors with a given identity"[20]). That is, normative lessons of history unite actors across space *and* time into a distinctive community. This includes modern transnational movements of militarized *jihadists* such as al-Qaeda and The Islamic State. These actors have a variety of aims but share the strategies and ideational foundations of Muhammad's historical struggle.

1.3/THEORETICAL TOOLS FOR EXPLAINING THE TRANSFORMATION

John Ruggie says constructivism "is about human consciousness and its role in international life."[21] Generally speaking, constructivists see ideas and beliefs as intervening between actors and their interests. The goal of constructivist analysis is to determine the manner in which ideas shape the identities and interests of actors and how these thereby (re)produce an ideational 'structure' that channels the behavior of corporate actors in the international system. Of course, this view self-consciously positions constructivism in opposition to rationalist explanations of international relations[22]which typically accept as 'given' an exogenous set of identities and interests for theoretical actors (for instance, realist actors seek power; neorealist actors seek security; and neoliberal actors seek to maximize utility). In one sense, the actors in

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19 Goldstein and Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy*,"* 4. These neoliberal scholars accept that religion may occupy a powerful place among ideas as a type of "worldview" but then fail to pursue the notion by saying the linkages between power and world views are "complex and need investigation." (p. 8). Ruggie writes that in neoliberal conceptions, ideas make no real difference to actor behaviour except to tell us "how they go about their business." John Gerard Ruggie, "What Makes the World Hang Together? Neo-utilitarianism and the Social Constructivist Challenge," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (Autumn 1998): 867. Nonetheless, it's important to note that neoliberal explanations are challenging to constructivist theory. At the actor-level, it becomes difficult to determine where "utility" and "beliefs" begin and end. Most constructivist scholars seem to accept that broadly-defined self-interests must be part of any belief system. As the old joke goes about Mother Theresa's saintly deeds: "Ah, she just wanted to get into heaven!"

20 Peter J. Katzenstein, "Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security," in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996): 5

21 Ruggie, "What Makes the World Hang Together?" 856.

22 Latha Varadarajan, "Constructivism, Identity, and Neoliberal (in)Security" *Review of International Studies* 30, no. 3 (July 2004): 324.

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rationalist theories are 'reactors,' reacting to their environment and changes in the environment by attempting to reestablish an equilibrium through balancing, bargaining, and so on. In these theories, the 'material' environment of capabilities -of money and guns for instance- is what drives international behaviour. This is because, for rationalists, to one degree or another, the international environment is governed by a single defining structural characteristic: the self-help imperative arising from systemic anarchy. In this condition, actors must concentrate on meeting the ongoing needs of survival.[23]

Constructivist theory rejects the notion that the environment has an ontologically prior claim on an actor's consciousness. Instead, the substance of an actor's perception of their environment determines the content of their response:

> There is no 'logic' of anarchy apart from the practices that create and instantiate one structure of identities and interests rather than another; structure has no existence or causal powers apart from process. Self-help and power politics are institutions, not essential features of anarchy.[24]

Constructivists have developed a set of propositions concerning the means by which ideas and beliefs produce outcomes in behaviour that cannot be fully explained by variations in a system's distribution of power. One scholar has recently described the main tenets of constructivism as follows:

(a) "constructivists assume that actors and structures are mutually constituted"
(b) "constructivists contend that interests are a function of identity"
(c) "constructivists argue that ideas shape identities, interests, and behaviour"
(d) "constructivists assume that communication plays a central role in the social construction of phenomena."[25]

In analyzing the hard reality of international politics, constructivists have varied views.

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23 This is the essence of Richard Ashley's criticism of neorealism when he writes, "In short, neorealism regards international order entirely as a derivative relation." Richard K. Ashley, "The Poverty of Neorealism" in *Neorealism and its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 277.
24 Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," in *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 395.
25 David L. Rousseau, *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities: The Social Construction of Realism and Liberalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 39-41.

Alexander Wendt relies on structural explanations for behaviour. Others take a reductionist viewpoint and examine identity and norms as emerging from domestic sources. Generally, constructivists prioritize understanding above parsimony and move fairly freely between levels of analysis.[26] In this thesis, I also adopt a flexible approach although I aim to show that a systemic transformation had system-level causes (even if change originated at a 'domestic' level).

Constructivists claim the visible activities of international politics primarily result from an ongoing interpretive exercise by the actors within a given international system. Actors define their identities and interests (to a large degree, at any rate) from the particular set of widely shared ('intersubjective') beliefs held across the system, beliefs shaped and cemented through the feedback of repeated interactions. This set comprises the political culture of the international system – norms of appropriate behaviour, and so on. Ultimately, this culture defines a system's social structure.[27]

The social structure of a system channels and shapes actors' behaviour but insofar as this structure exists only as a set of practices created by actors,[28]it's also being shaped and reproduced through actor behaviour. This "mutual constitution" sees actors adapt to the normative rules of the social structure while the structure is then reproduced by actors behaving accordingly. One scholar describes the process like this: "Mutual constitution is a fundamental social process that posits that actors create social structures through their actions and interactions, while, in turn, social structures influence who actors are, what they want, and what they do.[29]

I argue that another step intervenes between actors and the ideational structure that makes up the culture of a system. These intervening entities are systemic social institutions in which

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26 See for instance Martha Finnemore's justification in *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs About the Use of Force* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 141.
27 Wendt, *Social Theory,* 249-50. Wendt borrows this notion of a system's "political culture" from Mlada Bukovansky, a scholar whose work is also influential in my own argument later in this thesis.
28 Alexander Wendt, "The State as Person in International Theory," *Review of International Studies* 30, no. 2 (April 2004): 313.
29 Matthew J. Hoffmann, "Constructing a Complex World: The Frontiers of International Relations Theory and Foreign Policy-making." *Asian Journal of Political Science* 11, no. 10 (December 2003): 44.

norms and behaviours meet in a regularized fashion. Friedrich Kratochwil defines them as "settled and routinized practices established and regulated by norms."[30] Christian Reus-Smit adds a reflective element by describing social institutions as ••value complexes that 'define the meaning and identity of the individual.••[31] Institutions can have bricks-and-mortar permanence (as organizations) but they can also be strictly ideational phenomena. The rules provide regularity to behaviour in that they create accepted practice in a given area of activity. This lends social institutions their readily visible (and therefore measurable) discursive and active presence. I concentrate analytically on several social institutions as causing and signposting system-level change in the Hijaz at the time of Muhammad.

1.4/METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Can we draw useful comparisons from eras so far removed from our own?

Constructivist methods are not predicated on the existence of specific political arrangements or material organizational structures. Instead, the *processes* of interaction, universal in humanity, are the focus of constructivist inquiry and the 'stuff' which is abstracted into theory and applied across time and space. For example, in a general way, this approach helped John Ruggie model the European shift from feudalism to a modern system of territorial states. Ruggie allowed that some utility-based interests were at work, but concluded finally...

> ...that the domain of social epistemes, the mental equipment by means of which people re-imagined their collective existence, played a critical role...Social epistemes affected outcomes via the mechanisms of social empowerment and delegitimation and by informing such doctrinal contrivances as extraterritoriality, on which the society of territorial state formations came to rest.[32]

Ten years earlier, Ruggie argued that the shift from feudalism to territorial states could not be

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30 Rey Koslowski and Friedrich V. Kratochwil, "Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire's Demise and the International System" *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 222.

31 Christian Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 13. For his part, Wendt writes: "Institutions are made of norms and rules, which are ideational phenomena - 'shared mental models'" Wendt, *Social Theory,* 96.

32 John Gerard Ruggie,"Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations" *International Organization* 47, no. 1(Winter 1993): 169.

explained by 'neorealism' as formulated by Kenneth Waltz.[33] Ruggie claimed that Waltz had made one of neorealism's structural categories overly mechanistic and failed to fully appreciate the socially-dependent contingency within his second structural determinant, namely the "differentiation" of units.

The error, in Ruggie's view, arose with conceiving of anarchy as compelling all the units of a system into becoming functionally identical. Waltz argued that in a system of self-help, every unit must adopt survival as its primary aim. This is why neorealism made differentiation, as a systemic variable, analytically insignificant, at least so long as states interact in an environment of anarchy.   Ruggie, however, argued differentiation could mean something other than "differences", suggesting instead "that which denotes separateness." In this re-reading, the effect of anarchy on states is now 'denoted' by subjective forces such as (Ruggie later argued) views on legitimacy and sovereignty. Ruggie explains, "the modern system is distinguished from the medieval not by 'sameness' or 'differences' of units, but by the principles on the basis of which the constituent units are separated from one another."[34] Ruggie shifts the fulcrum of international change from a focus on a distribution of capabilities to systems of belief. That is, how beliefs disseminated among actors concerning the legitimacy of the terms of their "separateness". By framing research in this way, Ruggie made possible the comparable examination of medieval feudalism and the modern state system.

Comparability can be further enhanced by using analytical concepts common in IR to help establish the analytical parameters of non-Westphalian case studies. In 1972, Kal Holsti published a sort of 'user's guide' to international systems[35] which examined historical systems ranging from the 10th century BC to the Italian Renaissance. Although not new historical ground, Holsti's

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33 John Gerard Ruggie, "Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis," *World Politics* 35, no. 2 (January 1983): 273. Ruggie's dispute over differentiation is only one part of his dissection of Waltz.
34 Ruggie,"Continuity and Transformation," 274.
35 K.J. Holsti. *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972). See particularly: "Chapter 2: International Systems". The following discussion draws from the material on pages 29-61.

approach was unique for its careful delineation of the properties of each system in a manner that set criteria for comparing distant and modern periods (his criteria are a template for our case study in Chapter Three).

Briefly, Holsti first defines "systemic boundaries": "the line between interaction and environment."[36] Actors are within a "system" when they are largely unaffected by the behaviour of contemporaneous systems operating in the external environment. Secondly, Holsti writes that 'units' of a system should have some mechanism of government capable of setting external objectives and mobilizing resources. Research has helped dispel the notion that sovereign 'units' in a system must be mimics of Westphalian administrative structures.[37] Instead, state-like corporate actors should have an idea of what they want and how to get it, and have the will to obtain their desires. Holsti's third criterion concerns the general distribution of power among actors and the resulting relationships between them (unipolar, bipolar, etc). An international system, he says, should have an identifiable structure and clear criterion for describing the terms of its stratification. Fourth, Holsti writes that a system should be characterized by multiple points of interaction among actors (including war, trade, alliances, and so on). He lastly notes the importance of marking the *processes* of interaction that shape international relationships

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36 Holsti, *International Politics,* 30
37 This 'unit' question was central to Neta Crawford's work studying Iroquois Indian nations in 15th century America. Her solution was to separate notions of 'state' from 'government': Indian nations might differ from European 'states' but they shared functions of 'government' in ways we now conceive of the term (defining leadership, conducting of diplomacy, distribution of collective goods, and so on). Neta Crawford, "A Security Regime Among Democracies: Cooperation Among Iroquois Nations", *International Organization* 48, no. 3(Summer 1994): 350.
    Wendt takes this question of 'state-ness' a step further by describing state-like actors as being homeostatic structures, self-sustaining in the key areas of physical defence, preservation of autonomy, 'economics' (ensuring members have access to goods), and self-esteem. Wendt, *Social Theory,* 235-8. Wendt elsewhere describes states as centers of "group corporate intentions": "[C]orporate actors involve members who see themselves as part of a group in pursuit of shared ends, but they are typically institutionalized and hierarchical." Alexander Wendt, "The State as Person," 297-8. Moreover, like the system in which a state is embedded, the state must also have boundaries. Wendt describes, "a process of closure, of cutting a spatial and political boundary between a domestic inside and a foreign outside." Wendt, "The State as Person," 308.
    This notion of 'boundary' does not, I believe, necessarily require a territorial demarcation. Others have argued that nomadic tribes have carried along inside/outside boundaries while traveling migratory routes. See for instance Friedrich Kratochwil, "Of Systems, Boundaries, and Territoriality: An Inquiry into the Formation of the State System," *World Politics* 39, no. 1 (October 1986): 29. Ruggie says of this portable sovereignty: "To be sure, territory was occupied in kin-based systems, but it did not define them." Ruggie, "Territoriality and Beyond,"149. He goes on to quote Owen Lattimore as calling this "the sovereign right of movement."

including the norms, customs and rules governing politics between units.

Historical source material

I neither read nor speak Arabic and therefore rely on secondary sources for detailing the early history of Islam. Fortunately, Muhammad's life and teachings are well-chronicled. The sources used by most scholars begin with the revelatory statements of Muhammad as compiled in the *Quran*, declarations recorded *ad hoc* by Muhammad's followers then assembled in a complete collection roughly 25 years after his death. The result is a series of revelations viewed by Muslims as the Word of God *orally revealed* to Muhammad (who then passed these messages to humanity).[38] The second major source is the *Sunna* which comprises the 'sayings' of Muhammad (when speaking as a man, distinct from his prophetic role transmitting revelations from God), his actions, and descriptions of those things he allowed or permitted.[39] An extensive body of traditions arguably considered "authentic" by Muslim scholars has circulated since the 10th century. And finally, scholars use the translations of the earliest biographies of Muhammad produced in the eighth and ninth centuries.

The mind of Muhammad

An important question lingers at the edge of this project: where did Muhammad acquire his ideas? This debate has raged for centuries, the answers often shaped by the prejudices of the investigators. In 1697, an English scholar dismissed Muhammad as "an old lecher."[40] In 1734, George Sale described Islam as a human invention owing "its progress and establishment almost entirely to the sword." Gibbon claimed Muhammad attracted the Arabs to Islam with "the bait of loot and sex."[41] By the middle of the 20th century, Montgomery Watt could at least describe

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38 Rahman, *Islam,* 30-33.
39 John Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 80-83.
40 W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 3.
41 Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Western Attempt to Understand Islam* (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1991), 37. Lt.

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Muhammad as "sincere but mistaken"[42] while another scholar noted, "[Muhammad] could and did re-create the lives of men."[43]

Constructivists wrestle with questions of how ideas originate. Jeffrey Checkel has challenged constructivists to explain how individuals come to hold the beliefs they do.[44] Duncan Bell believes constructivists focus on *agency* but have no useful understanding of *agents* and "the motivations of individuals, their desires, irrationalities, fantasies... [constructivism] lacks, that is, a sociology of the subject."[45] Yet these questions seem excessively reductionist and only constructivists engaged in deep theory-building have attempted to respond. In general, constructivists study how ideas interplay within a *process*. Most constructivists seem content to wait for ideas to leave the skull of the individual, studying notions as they become instantiated in discourse and behaviour. As Charles Tilly notes, "fortunately, it matters little for present purposes whether we are dealing with inventions or emergents; once they are in place, people employ them for a wide variety of relational work."[46] For his part, Watt brushed aside the question of Islam's ideational origins as being "beyond the competence of the historian."[47] In a fundamental sense, I agree. Studies on the impact of ideas on political life don't necessitate that we first explain how an idea is born. As Keohane and Goldstein write, "We do not seek to explain the sources of these ideas; we focus on their effects."[48]

General Sir John Glubb exemplifies this latter view with a kind of neoliberal account of Muhammad's proselytizing strategy. Glubb writes of The Quran's descriptions of heavenly paradise, "its houris, beautiful virgins perpetually young, were precisely such as to tempt the poor bedouins, whose lives were an endless struggle against physical hardships." Lt. General Sir John Glubb, *A Short History of the Arab Peoples* (London: JBG, Ltd., 1969), 34.

42 W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad*,17.

43 H.M. Balyuzi, *Muhammad and the Course of Islam* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1976), 3.

44 Jeffrey T. Checkel, "The Constructivist Turn in International Theory," *World Politics* 50, no. 2 (April 1998): 341.

45 Duncan Bell, "Remaking Anarchy," *The Review of Politics* 65, no. 3 (May 2003): 477.

46 Charles Tilly, "International Communities, Secure or Otherwise," in *Security Communities*, eds. Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 404.

47 Montgomery Watt, "Muhammad" in *The Cambridge History of Islam: Volume 1A*. eds. P.M. Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 31.

48 Goldstein and Keohane, "Ideas and Foreign Policy," 7.

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICAL INQUIRY AND THE STUDY OF SYSTEM CHANGE

2.0 HISTORY AS THE BATTLEFIELD OF THEORY

This paper presents one method of understanding an instance of international system change. As a broad subject of inquiry, 'change' has received relatively little attention in IR.[49] Not surprisingly perhaps, the research that exists often links the analysis of system change with the study of history. Afterall, most IR theories draw in some way from examples of past international behaviour. We find therefore that the historical record is ammunition for widely differing theories.

For instance: as we've seen, one persistent debate concerns the challenge of explaining the European transition from feudalism to the modern system of states. As an early constructivist, Ruggie argued that this shift was less about changes in material power than a change in the way territorial rule was legitimized: "The issue that was up for grabs during the transformation was not who had *how much power*, but who had *the right to act as a power.*[50] Ruggie claimed that the dominant theory in IR – neorealism - couldn't adequately explain this transition."[51]

Kenneth Waltz rejected the critique and argued Ruggie's account was a unit-level event with little structural significance: "Only a structural transformation can abolish the international imperative – take care of yourself! - and replace it with the domestic one – specialize!"[52] In response to the more general criticism that neorealism's rigid structural determinism and systemic view fails to explain much of substance in international affairs, Waltz replied, "Structures never tell us all that we want to know. Instead they tell us a small number of big and important things."

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49 This was especially true prior to the mid-1980's. Until then, according to Dina Zinnes, most 'systemic' studies were primarily taxonomies of static systems. Dina A. Zinnes, "Prerequisites for the Study of System Transformation" in *Change in the International System*, eds. Alexander L. George, Ole R. Holsti, Randolph M Siverson (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980), 3.

50 John Gerard Ruggie, "International Structure and International Transformation: Space, Time and Method," in *Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Approaches to World Politics for the 1990s*, eds. Ernst-Otto Czempiel and James N. Rosenau (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1989), 28.

51 ", "...the most important contextual change in international relations in this millennium" John Gerard Ruggie, "Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Towards a Neorealist Synthesis," in *World Politics* 35, no.2 (January 1983): 273.

52 Kenneth Waltz, "Reflections on Theory of International Politics: A Response to My Critics," in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 326.

Viewed through his parsimonious theory, Waltz assessed the history of international politics as being "strikingly constant."[53]

Two theorists view the same historical data - one sees change, the other continuity. What differs is the intellectual software - the theories- used to process the raw facts.

2.1/IR THEORY AND THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

In the 1980's, the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War ushered in a period of introspection for theorists of international relations. The dominant paradigms - realism and neorealism - were criticized for failing to predict the war's end and, moreover, for being unable to explain the peaceful (ie: non-predatory) behaviour of the remaining superpower, the United States.[54] Koslowski and Kratochwil argued that theorists had failed to foresee the transformation of the system[55] because of their theoretical emphasis on measuring and explaining change using primarily materialist variables.[56] Barry Jones blamed IR's theoretical imprecision, noting that theorists struggled to explain even the most basic historical events (for instance, Jones asked, does a war herald the breakdown of a system? Or the successful reestablishment of its equilibrium?[57]). Jones and Barry Buzan further pointed to a sort of field chauvinism that prevented IR scholars from appreciating events occurring outside their own theoretical turf:

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53 Waltz, "Reflections on Theory of International Politics," 329.
54 John Ruggie wryly noted that realist Robert Gilpin had always insisted peaceful international change was "a very low-probability event". John Gerard Ruggie, "Multilateralism: the Anatomy of An Institution," *International Organization* 46, no. 3 (Summer 1992): 562. For his part, Richard Falk, writing shortly after the collapse of the USSR, indicated that the relatively non-violent nature of events "were not at all foreseeable through the realist lens." Richard A. Falk, "Theory, Realism, and World Security," in *World Security: Trends and Challenges at Century's End*, eds. Michael T. Klare and Daniel C. Thom (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 6. On the other side, some neorealists maintained that little had actually changed. So, an unnamed senior member of a conference discussing post-cold war IR theory "expressed his dissatisfaction with the proceedings" by claiming that the end of the superpower rivalry was a "mere data point." Richard Ned Lebow, "The Long Peace, the End of the Cold War, and the Failure of Realism," *International Organization* 48, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 251-2.
55 They wrote: "While the relative capabilities of the European Community, the Soviet Union, and the United States did not change very much during the years leading up to 1989, international politics was fundamentally transformed in just that one year." Koslowski and Kratochwil, "Understanding Change in International Politics," 227.
56 By way of illustration, George Modelski, a sophisticated structural theorist devoted to the study of change, had looked ahead to the international system of 2016 and noted, "The prospect ahead is for the relative stability of the bipolar world political structure, with only moderate deconcentration and some rearrangement of alliances and for a relatively calm and prosperous global economic outlook in the early twenty-first century." Quoted in Jayantanuja Bandyopadhyaya, *General Theory of International Relations* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers Ltd, 1993), 239.
57 R.J. Barry Jones, "Concepts and Models of Change,"in *Change and the Study of International Relations*, eds. R.J. Barry Jones and Barry Buzan (London: Frances Pinter, 1981), 13.

Few developments of significance in the international system are purely 'political', 'economic', 'psychological' or technological' in cause. Unfortunately, social scientists have tended to exacerbate this problem by moving towards ever higher levels of differentiation and fragmentation.[58]

In 1996, Peter Katzenstein described the rationale of frustration that lay behind his edited volume on alternative theories of national security: "Our point of departure is influenced greatly by the inability of all theories of international relations, both mainstream and critical, to help us explain fully what John Mueller aptly calls a quiet cataclysm: the dramatic changes in world politics since the mid-90s..."[59]

One could expect, (paraphrasing Justice Potter Stewart) that at least we might know system change when we see it. Yet from an analytical viewpoint, this clearly is not the case. John Maclean notes the "paradox" that international change is at once "ubiquitous" and yet the details of change are often "not self-evident."[60] In one study, Dina Zinnes attempted to clarify the basic questions she believed were essential to studying international change: how do we measure factors such as degrees of change (what "threshold" of change must be crossed to declare a system 'altered'?) and the instigators of change (such as technology, economic or population growth rates, or changes in the distribution of power?). Zinnes ultimately concluded that "no progress" had been made in understanding how one variable influences another or how they fundamentally influence the system itself.[61] She found no clear consensus on what causes or constitutes international system change.

Her conclusion was widely reflected in the various volumes on the subject. James Rosenau noted, almost apologetically, that scholars contributing to his edited work on international change had, for the most part, presented entirely different understandings of even

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58 Buzan and Jones, "Introduction", in *Change and the Study of International Relations,* 4.
59 Peter Katzenstein, "Introduction", in *The Culture of National Security*, 2.
60 John Maclean, "Marxist Epistemology, Explanations of 'Change,' and the Study of International Relations," in *Change And The Study of International Relations*, 48.
61 Zinnes, "Prerequisites for the Study of System Transformation," 15. She even suggests, "The inability to distinguish between systems necessarily makes impossible a study of system transformation." Ibid. 16

basic concepts:[62] "[C]hanges, and continuities too, are not objective phenomena. Their existence acquires meaning through conceptual formulation and not empirical observation. It is not history that dictates whether change has occurred, but rather the interests of observers".[63] That is, what we see of the world depends on the ideological window from which we choose to gaze.[64] Indeed, debates following the Cold War highlighted long-standing tensions in IR between explaining change and continuity, differences arising partly from differing epistemological stances over interpreting history.

After the Second World War period, scholars studying system change typically fell into one of two broad camps, as suggested by Donald Puchala: "Is *plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose* the leitmotif of international history, or is it simply *plus ca change, plus ca change*?"[65] Scholars in the latter group believed history advances in a somewhat linear fashion. For those in the former group however, world history exhibited *cyclical* patterns of war and peace as great powers rose and fell over time, with each cycle displaying only a limited degree of change within specific and limited parameters.

Organski's "Power Transition Theory" described a cyclical pattern of international power shifts occurring at intervals of around 100 years. Organski argued that the most powerful state in the system sets the rules (norms, economic setups, etc). Change occurred as a second-tier "great power" rose to the economic level of the dominant state and then sought to achieve equilibrium by adding a matching degree of political power. The decline of the hegemon (in relative terms) emboldens the challenger to introduce a new systemic order. War is a frequent (though not an

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62   He wrote, "It is a difficult and elusive concept, pervaded with ambiguity and marked by a deceptive simplicity." James Rosenau, "Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Approaches to World Politics for the 1990s," in *Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges,* 15.

63   Ibid.

64   Richard Little noted: "Any conception of change is ideologically conditioned...By this I do not only mean that our evaluation of change – whether a change be good or evil – is affected by our ideology, but also that the way we describe and explain change is ideologically conditioned."Richard Little, "Ideology and Change," in *Change And The Study of International Relations,* 30.

65   Donald Puchala, *Theory and History in International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 3

absolute) result.[66]

In a similar way, George Modelski described century-long cycles of global leadership in which one state became hegemonic through leveraging economic, political and cultural power. This synthesis is a key distinction: Modelski believed hegemons are not tyrants but rather legitimized sources of global political leadership. Modelski thereby downplayed the impact of "anarchy", writing, "[W]hat is amazing is the degree of structure created by leadership."[67] Ultimately, a dominant state reaches a plateau of power and authority but encounters difficulty fulfilling its functions coordinating global affairs. Challenges increase and the hegemon's legitimacy declines as raw power replaces authority. War sets the stage for a power transition.

Much of Robert Gilpin's work followed a similar path. Gilpin also saw history as demonstrating change embedded in continuity.[68] Gilpin elaborated on "The Hegemonic Stability Theory" (introduced by Charles Kindleberger) in which a hegemon establishes and maintains normative and administrative structures to guide the world political economy. Gilpin believed regular cycles of environmental change in the system – such as technological developments or alterations in the setups of domestic governance – create disequilibria requiring the hegemon's constant effort to keep goods moving smoothly. Problems arise as threats from challengers force the hegemon to boost power expenditures in order to maintain position (moves such as increasing resource extraction or military production). This triggers the hegemon's decline as his economic base erodes and new players become assertive in demanding substantive change.[69]

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66 For a sketch of Organski's theory, see "A.F.K. Organski, "The Power Transition", *Classics of International Relations*, ed. John A. Vasquez (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990), 283.

67 George Modelski, quoted in William C. Olson and A.J.R. Groom, *International Relations Then and Now: Origins and Trends in Interpretation* (London: Harper Collins Academic, 1991), 245. Modelski described what we might call a 'full-service' hegemon as being simultaneously an economic and cultural leader.: "The basic relationship is that of the world power providing...the political basis for global economic relations." (Ibid. 248).

68   He wrote, "The basic assumption of this study has been that the nature of international relations has not changed fundamentally over the millennia."Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 211.

69 Ultimately: "[A] group or a state will attempt to change the political system in response to developments that increase its relative power or decrease the costs of modifying political arrangements and will continue its efforts until an equilibrium is reached between the costs and benefits of further change."Robert Gilpin quoted in R.J. Vincent, "Change and International

This sample of cyclical theories demonstrates the way many theories of system change relied on materialist structures to explain the patterns of history. In this view, structures (economic or political) act upon agents in a mechanistic way, with the agents reacting like billiard balls to changes in the environment. Little wonder R.J. Vincent viewed cyclical theories as being more concerned with explaining continuity than change[70] - balls move about on an unchanging table whose parameters are enduring.

In the late 1950's, Dutch economist Jan Tinbergen took a more linear approach, describing a causal link between socialist nations experimenting with market adaptations and elements of democratization, and capitalist states expanding their welfare systems and imposing tighter rules on markets. Tinbergen argued that both camps were in an evolutionary process of learning and thus in "permanent change".[71] He saw "converging movements" that would ultimately harmonize the two systems. In this way, Tinbergen believed system change could emerge from a process of adaption.

In a similar way, the neoliberals argued that cooperation could characterize international behaviour, even where actors pursued broadly realist aims of interest-maximization under the conditions of anarchy. Although their work did not directly investigate system change, they addressed system-level theoretical mechanisms and constraints through which states might negotiate a shift from conflict to cooperation.[72] As states repeatedly and peacefully interact, force becomes an inefficient tool for accomplishing interests or enforcing rules. States gradually establish transnational linkages which herald a "complex interdependence" wherein hierarchies of interests are muddied, power becomes diffused, and norms and values take on increased

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Relations," *Review of International Studies* 9, no.1 (January 1983): 67.

70 Vincent refers to Gilpin's remark that "Thucydides would have little trouble in understanding the power struggle of our own age despite those features such as the advent of nuclear weapons, economic interdependence, and global society which are supposed to make us different."Vincent, "Change and International Relations," 69.

71 He wrote, "This essay proposes to show that the changes are in many respects converging movements. .... [T]he systems begin to influence each other more and more."Jan Tinbergen, "Do Communist and Free Economies Show a Converging Pattern?" in *Soviet Studies* 12, no. 1 (April 1961): 333

72 See for instance Robert Keohane in *After Hegemony*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 25-6.

importance. Moreover, commonly-held goals are identified such that cooperation allows individual actors to secure benefits over time. The result is a lessening (but not elimination) of the importance of power in managing the system, such that coordination and trust partially supplant the place of force among segments of the global system.[73]

The work of John Herz blended linear and cyclical elements. He believed international system change could be explained by changes in the destructive range of weapons that had, through history, forced populations to form larger political units for defence (his classic example was the walled city, a unit rendered obsolete by the invention of gunpowder).[74]However Herz argued that nuclear weapons represented a force of such ultimate destructive power that the nation-state was obsolete. No country could absorb a nuclear attack and only an expansive security community could encompass the threat.

Herz represented, according to a tribute by Richard Ashley, a form of realism anchored in "reflective reason."[75] This form of "practical realism", while retaining realism's hard-nosed attitude towards (in)security among states, rejects notions of humanity as subject to ontologically prior psychological drives for domination. Ashley argued that neorealism (and partly, classical realism) embedded a presumption of humanity's deep incorrigibility, such that self-interested behaviour among states is not only inevitable but desirable. That is, if human beings and states are doomed to betray one another in a ceaseless quest for power or position, then every responsible statesman must remain vigilant.[76] "Change" equates to dangerous instability. If historical change seems only a continual rearrangement of power centers with little change in the essential structure of the system, this is both as it is, and *as it should be,* in Ashley's reading.

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73 Ibid. 243-4.
74   John Herz, *International Politics in the Atomic Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 13
75 Richard K. Ashley, "Political Realism and Human Interests" in *International Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (June 1981): 226.
76   As Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett write in a charming phrase, "Neo-realist and realist theories stress the notion that while war does not take place all the time, like rain, it is always expected." Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, "Security Communities in Theoretical Perspective," in *Security Communities*, 10.

Ashley argued that practical realists such as Herz see actors as creating and changing the conditions of their existence through attaching meaning to themselves and their outward circumstances. Herz wrote, "I account for power 'urges', power competition, and similar 'power factors' in international politics by recourse to a social rather than a metaphysical or psychological constellation – the security dilemma."[77] According to Ashley, historical change in Herz's worldview occurs when emergent conditions encounter human consciousness. Human beings are not evil, just scared.[78] They desire peace and under suitable conditions reshape their environment through "dialogue", changed perceptions and -basically- shifts in identity.[79] In this reading of Herz, while the instruments and manifestations of change are material (weapons, states, and so on), the substance of the changes are ideational (perceptions, desires, etc.).[80]

Unfortunately, while Herz suggests 'humans interpret their environment', he goes on to predetermine the substance of that interpretation in a way that makes meaningless any real sense of choice. The options are exogenous, and the actors come to the table theoretically preconfigured to choose the particular option that fits the singular causative challenge they face (ie, changes in weapons technology). Thus Herz includes the potential for genuine human reflection, but then blindfolds actors to all but one reality.

Still, the spirit of Herz's proto-ideational notion of change – based as it is upon principles of realist self-interest – can be found in Sean Shore's study of the US-Canadian security

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77 John Herz, "Comment" *International Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (June 1981): 238-9.
78 Sylvest, "John H. Herz and the Resurrection of Classical Realism." *International Relations* 22, no. 4 (December 2008): 448. Friedrich Kratochwil reinterprets the work of Thomas Hobbes in a similar way. Kratochwil notes that in Hobbes' treatise, human beings leave the state of nature not because of "rational calculation but...the overwhelming fear of violent death." Friedrich Kratochwil, "The Protagorean Quest: Community, Justice, and the 'Oughts' and 'Musts' of International Politics," *International Journal*, xliii (Spring 1998): 220. Kratochwil seems to suggest that neorealist theory embeds a similar notion - that the international behaviour of states can be explained through the perceptual act of managing fear. This reflective behaviour may be the basis of Waltz's idea of state socialization, a notion which Kratochwil says seems out of place and "in violation of [Waltz's] own theoretical presuppositions." Ibid. 206.
79 Ashley, "Political Realism," 230-2. I am omitting a discussion of another theme in Ashley's work, namely the theoretical possibilities in realism of working towards normative goals. Ashley believes "technical" realism, neorealism, offers no avenue for universalist ambitions - notions of building a more united world.
80 No surprise by this description that some scholars argue Herz's form of realism "was based on a philosophy of science that today would be labeled constructivist." Sylvest, "John H. Herz and the Resurrection of Classical Realism," 442.

relationship since the American Revolution. Although not concerned with system change as such, Shore's work is instructive for its portrayal of change as occurring in an evolutionary and relatively frictionless manner, without easily discernible signposts.

Shore describes the tensions that existed between Canada and the U.S. in the wake of the British defeat by American revolutionaries and which reached their apogee during the War of 1812. Shore then demonstrates how the long and largely undefended border between the two countries, initially unfortified only for reasons of expense and American triumphalist belief in the inevitability of 'manifest destiny', came to symbolize the peaceful intent between the two countries. Shore shows that this historical shift from enmity to alliance took place with little material change in the capabilities between states. Instead, a process of socialization helped the countries learn to trust one another. Quoting Wendt, Shore writes, ""The mechanism here is reinforcement; interaction rewards actors for holding certain ideas about each other and discourages them from holding others."[81] Positive reinforcements (money saved on unnecessary defence expenditure, increasing traffic of trade goods, etc) led to the creation of a shared (albeit modest) regional identity among the two communities. The resulting 'cognitive region', according to Shore, further made North America a unique and peaceful "cultural area" as opposed to war-torn Europe.[82] In this way, ideational shifts strengthened the formation of a unique and peaceful, 'North American' identity.

I've noted how some theories of system change can seem overly deterministic. Over-simplified materialist variables are often awarded significant causative power, although they really explain very little. Admittedly, the set of 'linear' theories we sampled above each embodied, to varying degrees, a sense of human adaptability (aggregated in the organized form of a state).

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81 Sean M. Shore, "No Fences Make Good Neighbours: The Development of The Canadian-US Security Community" in *Security Communities,* 334.
82 Shore, "No Fences," 354.

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Yet even here: external material factors drag witless actors through history.

If system change can be understood, at a semantic minimum, to mean a shift over time in the nature of the interactions among a set of units, then we might begin by asking ourselves how we should study the canvas of history upon which these interactions are portrayed. Because I would argue that at the heart of understanding - and misunderstanding - system change is the meta-theoretical question of the nature of historical inquiry and the epistemological tools with which it is dissected.

2.2/HISTORY AS THE LABORATORY OF SYSTEM CHANGE IN IR

John Adams, the American "founding father", used a "laboratory" metaphor to describe his preferred method of studying history. In historical inquiry, Adams wrote, "the systems of legislators" seem as "experiments made on human life and manners, society and government."[83] Adams uses an interesting formulation, if I can take some liberties with the passage.

What if Adams had suggested a 'Petri dish' view of history for his physicalist metaphor? In the natural sciences, Petri dishes grow unspoiled samples of organisms within regulated (thus, artificial) environments. The scientist seeds a culture (a medium) with particles then waits to collect the product. By holding the growth environment constant, the product can be predicted to emerge unspoiled and reflective of whatever scientific intent motivated the original seeding. In some cases, Petri dishes are used to see if a particular organism will grow at all; the analyst wants to see if bacteria, for instance, will grow in this or that medium. In these cases, the research question is limited to a yes/no proposition. In summarizing all this, we could say the intention of the Petri dish is to create routines: routine management of growth and routine construction of predictable or even predictive outcomes.

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83 John E. Paynter, "The Rhetorical Design of John Adams's 'Defence of the Constitutions of … America," *The Review of Politics,* 58, no. 3 (Summer 1996): 558. In searching for solutions that might strengthen American republicanism, Adams advocated "...the most extensive view of men and societies." Ibid.

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If we walk back the metaphor, the student of history, working in his 'laboratory', becomes a manufacturer of meaning. The past is seeded into a dish containing a theoretical medium. The end product is a kind of pre-formed 'understanding' based upon the initial theoretical intent of the inquiry. The reason for this *a priori* effect is, of course, the reified environment of the "dish" itself. The 'knowledge' that emerges is less about the 'true' lived reality of an historical moment than it is an outcome emerging predictably from the theoretical medium used for analysis.

Leo Strauss castigated social scientists for this sort of historicism. He viewed many theoretical propositions in the social sciences as being precooked and tainted by the designers' deeply-held assumptions about the world. Particularly egregious, he claimed, was the often implicit view "that our thought 'is superior to the thought of the past.'"[84]As a result, Strauss claimed, most theory when laid upon objective history resulted in a kind of intellectual imperialism wherein conclusions reflected the mind of the theorist more than the era under study.[85]

To close this laboratory metaphor, let me say that John Adams hinted at a solution in directing us to study "experiments" of the past. These "experiments" have seemingly - according to the phrasing - *already* been conducted. Adams doesn't invite us to merely witness the *outcomes* of prior political experimentation, but rather the experiments *themselves* - the "systems" in which *beliefs* ("passions", he elsewhere calls them, and "the deepest human motives") and power arrangements interplay. In other passages, Adams expressed his belief that merely studying historical outcomes risked fruitless "imitation"[86]. Adams was primarily concerned with understanding how best to preserve liberty. In his view, knowledge could best be

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84 Bernard Susser, "Leo Strauss: The Ancient as Modern," in *Approaches to the Study of Politics*, ed. Bernard Susser (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1992), 414.

85 "[Historicism] misses the meaning of other cultures because it interprets these through a conceptual scheme which originates in modern western society, which reflects that particular society and which fits at best only to that particular society." *Ibid*.

86   Adams hoped to thusly convince his compatriots who were then lobbying for America to adopt a British Westminster-type government which Adams viewed as outwardly impressive but flawed in practice.

gained from using history to watch and problematize the unfolding human lessons embedded in *process*.[87]

The views of Strauss and Adams echo today in debates among students of international relations. This is particularly true for those using constructivist methods, for whom historical inquiry is a key methodological tool. As we'll see in moment, these scholars might see a kindred spirit in Adams' idealist-process approach to historical inquiry with many reflecting the views of Strauss in their critiques of the "use and abuse" of history by political realism.[88]

Political realism and the 'abuses' of history

Modern political realism arose from the ashes of the idealistic (and moralistic) theories which had dominated the inter-war period. The close of the Second World War saw America thrust into a position of global leadership and facing a powerful nuclear adversary with expansionist designs on an enfeebled Europe. In response, scholars such as Hans Morgenthau introduced a modified formulation of classic European *Realpolitik*. Soon, notions such as "balance of power" and "interest defined as power" became "the new orthodoxy in Anglo-American thinking on international affairs."[89]

For Barry Buzan and Richard Little, the rise of political realism inaugurated a distinctly anti-historical period in IR scholarship, particularly among American scholars.[90] Buzan and Little argue that the discipline developed what they call the "Westphalian Straitjacket": "[T]he strong tendency to assume that the model established in seventeenth century Europe should define what

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87 Paynter, "The Rhetorical Design…", 559. Adams was swimming against the intellectual current of his time. Others thought this mode of historical analysis ran "too deep" and that history was being too overly used in written and rhetorical political discourse.

88 Laurie M. Johnson Bagby, "The Use and Abuse of Thucydides in International Relations," *International Organization* 48 no. 1 (Winter 1994): 131

89 Robert O. Keohane, "Realism, Neorealism and the Study of World Politics" in *Neorealism and its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 9.

90 Buzan and Little draw from the English School tradition of IR which is associated with realism - sometimes called 'liberal realism' - but often demonstrates an affinity for serious historical analysis. One scholar has described the English School as "...allowing an intermingling of explanation, description, and prescription informed by relevant historical facts, as well as more conceptual, philosophical analysis." Sylvest, "John H. Herz and The Resurrection of Classical Realism," 449.

the international system is for all times and places."[91] The Straitjacket arose from the need to stabilize the Soviet threat and for efficient management of the Cold War. As money, prestige and government patronage flowed into American IR departments and theorizing took on a policy-centric tilt, scholars found idealized Westphalian[92] models as the clearest choice for thinking about the dangerous contemporary environment. Other eras seemed technologically and philosophically remote although a few "histories" could be shoehorned into theories once they were modeled according to Westphalian formulation of states-systems-anarchy.[93] "In" was the study of the Greek and Italian city states, thanks partly to their analytically-transferable systems (because they were "stripped of their context", says Duncan Bell)[94], while "out" were studies of empires, feudalisms and other systems of hierarchy (as opposed to anarchy) that belied realism's claims of universal applicability regarding such features as the balance of power.[95]

Meanwhile, the advent of behaviourism led to growing demands in the discipline for detailed positivist research. Many viewed the practice of historical inquiry, with its masses of incoherent data, as being unable to provide high quality empirical "input".[96] Stanley Hoffmann criticized this approach by writing, in 1959, "[T] he consideration of men's values, beliefs, and emotions, of these purposes and ideas, is indispensable. Personalities, aberrant events, or historical accidents must not be forgotten under a mountain of numerical indicators and attributes."[97] In the event however, many political "studies" departments became political "science" and IR scholars became "self-proclaimed social-scientists."[98]

As segments of the discipline adopted methods borrowed from economics and grant

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91 Buzan and Little,"Why International Relations has Failed as an Intellectual Project and What to do About it," 25.
92 I should note that my focus here is on IR as studied in the United States. In the UK, the English School of IR made more use of historical material.
93 Buzan and Little,"Why International Relations has Failed as an Intellectual Project and What to do About it," 24.
94 Bell, "International Relations," 117. His comment referred particularly to Greece.
95 Buzan and Little, "Why International Relations has Failed as an Intellectual Project and What to do About it," 27
96 Buzan and Little, *International Systems in World History*, 26.
97 Quoted in K.J. Holsti, *Change in the International System*, 159.
98 Bell, "International Relations", 116.

money flowed to 'scientific' IR research, historical inquiry was sidelined. Christian Reus-Smit writes, "If one imagines these agents [states] as animated by a universal form of means-ends rationality, then the stuff of history drops out."[99] The deductive methods of theory development took center stage and theory was sprinkled with historical data points that could illustrate broader predictive arguments.

Moreover, the theoretical frameworks of some strains of realism incorporated anti-historical elements. Hans Morgenthau borrowed Reinhold Niebuhr's 'fallen man' to help explain why world history is the gloomy story of a struggle for power and survival.[100] How could the substance of a historical saga - the evolution and interaction of identities, interests, beliefs, ideologies, and so on - stand up to the first of Morgenthau's damning Principles of Political Realism which reads in part, "...politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature."[101] Meanwhile, Kenneth Waltz seemed to bracket-out history entirely in his enormously influential descriptions of a primarily mechanistic international order. [102] Shaped by various currents of behaviourism and security studies, Waltz created Neorealism (or Structural Realism), a theory in which state behaviour is constrained by a single invariable, allegedly present since the dawn of history, a 'structuralist' or 'positional' trait: "Structure is the unintended by-product of unit interaction. It is immune to efforts to modify it or mitigate its effects. Once structure is formed, Waltz insists, 'the creators become the creatures of [the system] that their activity gave rise to."[103] Long after the end of the Cold War, Waltz still stoutly maintains the science - and therefore universal-applicability - behind neorealism's law-like arguments. He uses scantily-supported stock phrases such as "history confirms" and "firmly

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99 Christian Reus-Smit, "Reading History Through Constructivist Eyes," 395.
100 See for instance pp. 3-4 and 14 in *Politics Among Nations*. Morgenthau cites at length a scholar from the 19th century who recalls the most terrible wars "...in which the the beast in man ever broke loose," 241.
101 Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations,* 4.
102 Some suggest Waltz simply embedded Morgenthau's notions of the Fallen Man into his theory. See: Cox, "Social Forces…," 215.
103 Lebow, "The Long Peace…", 273.

grounded...in history"[104] which seem to mirror Buzan and Little's "Straitjacket." Yet it's Waltz's notion of the all-determining, insurmountable, exogenously-created state of anarchy that most rankles his critics.[105]

This is partly because Waltz's structural determinism makes neorealism a theory of stability and continuity[106] that largely ignores history, except in the most superficial manner.[107] Ashley argues that "many neorealists will use an argument, a clause, a phrase from almost any source if it suits their purposes."[108] The resulting accusation is that neorealism is *anti-historical,* a claim at the center of a critique by historian Paul Schroeder. He dissects the record of post-Westphalian Europe and finds few of neorealism's propositions holding true.[109] Like Ashley, Schroeder says neorealism cherry-picks history to support theoretical proposition[110] and maintain the theory's parsimony.[111]

For Schroeder, the universal pretensions of neorealism are based not on the historical record but on what I've called the 'Petri dish' of theoretical construction from which its concepts emerge.[112] In this sense, Neorealism renders lived history meaningless. 'Change' is subsumed under laws

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104 Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism After the Cold War," *International Security* 25, no. 1 (Summer 2000): 26, 33. For his part, Robert Keohane addressed Waltz with an implicit suggestion that changes were needed, saying neorealism "...is not well defended by claiming that its 1970s formulation is sufficient for analyzing world politics in the twenty-first century." Robert O. Keohane, "The Neorealist and his Critic," *International Security* 25, no. 3 (Winter 2000/01): 204.

105 In defending his theory against similar accusations, Waltz seems to implicitly confirm what's been said: namely, there's no need to
dissect history, when history is all the same: "Through all the changes of boundaries, of social, economic, and political form, of economic and military activity...see that where political entities of whatever sort compete freely, substantive and stylistic characteristics are similar."
Waltz, "Reflections…" 329-30.

106 Peter J. Katzenstein, "International Relations Theory" 295.

107 Cox refers to neorealism treating history as "a quarry providing materials with which to illustrate variation on always recurrent themes…The mode of thought ceases to be historical, even though the materials used are derived from history." Cox, "Social Forces…" 212.

108 Ashely, "The Poverty of Neorealism," 175.

109 Schroeder argues that states did not primarily use self-help against threats to their security, nor did they balance rising hegemonic power(s) (choosing bandwagoning or other strategies instead) and many survived precisely because they chose international specialization and differentiation as a life-or-death tactic to ensure their security. These are each in contradiction to neorealism's core predictions. Schroeder, "Historical Reality," 116. 117-8. 125.

110 Schroeder, "Historical Reality," 114.

111 Schroeder writes "This neo-realist assumption, like its view of the unchanging, repetitive nature of balance-of-power politics and outcomes throughout the ages, may make its theory of international politics simple, parsimonious, and elegant; they also make it, for the historian at least, unhistorical, unusable, and wrong." Schroeder, "Historical Reality," 129.

112 Castigating one neorealist's misuse of history he writes "Armed with neo-realist theory, he knew what was essentially to be found in the historical record at the outset, and this helped him find it." Schroeder, "Historical Reality," 147.

and principles so vague and broad that continuity is the only thing the theory can reliably explain and predict.

Some of the accusations made against realism and neorealism – for crimes against history, perhaps? – may be overstated. Buzan and Little may themselves have 'over-egged the cake', as they implicitly admit in their footnotes where caveats list realist authors who've studied alternative historical eras and international systems. Nonetheless, if we put aside the question of degree then the core of this argument sticks. Namely, that American IR theory has often treated history as a reservoir of data points for insertion into theoretical models - some econometric, some more interpretive - that were shaped into deterministic concepts through implicit or explicit claims of universal truth.

The constantly shifting interplay of human consciousness and social interaction is invisible if every path of "history" lies on a predetermined outcome.[113] Reus-Smit rhetorically describes realism's didactic position by writing, "[T]here is one international history and it 'tells us,' teaches us,' 'reveals to us' certain eternal verities about politics in a world of sovereign states."[114]

Constructivism and the resurgence of historical inquiry in IR

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, theorists were suddenly freed from immediate fears of a nuclear holocaust. And as scholars ventured into the Russian archives they discovered a considerably different version of history from the one predicted in many versions of political realism. For instance, John Lewis Gaddis found that ideology – that is, ideas – were at the core of the defeat of the USSR.[115] Such findings led one constructivist scholar to write of the realists in American IR, "For a good part of the last forty years they have engaged in what amounts to their

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113 Robert Cox argues, "...both human nature and the structures of human interaction change, if only very slowly. History is the process of their changing. One cannot therefore speak of 'laws' in any generally valid sense transcending historical eras, nor of structures as outside of or prior to history." Cox, "Social Forces…" 243-4.
114 Reus-Smit, "Reading History," 401.
115 Among other things, Gaddis writes that democratic traditions (transparency, respect for diversity, and so on) cemented coalitions in a way that Stalinist relations with communist countries couldn't hope to replicate. See: Gaddis, *We Now Know,* especially pages 25-27.

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own version of a Cold War, a war in which, as so often, truth – or at least the search for it – has been the first victim."[116]

In the 21st century, the historical worm may be turning. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye sought to produce a taxonomy of the mechanisms through which globalization is affecting human life. In doing so, they reformulated a key statement from an earlier work, substituting "globalization" for "interdependence": "This vague phrase expresses a poorly understood but widespread feeling that the very nature of world politics is changing."[117] The suggestion of change raises the inevitable question (as Keohane and Nye recognize in their title): Change how, and how deeply?

The answers, many constructivists believe, can be found through a re-engagement with the dynamics of history. Reus-Smit argues that the end of the Cold War has already brought a "radical return" to historical inquiry in IR. He attributes this partly to the loosening of rationalist dominance over the discipline, but also to the growing interest in "the particularity and contingency of international history."[118] That mixture of era-specific context with the analysis of possibility (both conscious and otherwise) leads directly into the core of the constructivist project.

Over two hundred years ago, John Adams suggested that the study of 'process' was at the heart of useful historical inquiry. Alexander Wendt, among the first to try codifying constructivism into a coherent approach to international politics, frequently argues that constructivism is not a theory at all, but an analytical tool (or "lens") to serve as an aid to theorizing.[119] Wendt claims constructivism is methodology-as-method. That is, an approach to

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116 Kennedy-Pipe, "International History," 741.
117 Keohane and Nye "Globalization," 104.
118 An interest among constructivists, at least. "Christian Reus-Smit on IR Cultures, Re-thinking IR and Bridging the Normative-Empirical Divide,"*Theory Talks*, 24 March 2009. www.theory-talks.org/2009/30/theory-talk27.html
119 James Fearon and Alexander Wendt, "Rationalism v. Constructivism: A Skeptical View" in *Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A. Simmons. (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2002), 53. Wendt

international affairs that is driven by the analytical unpacking of lived existence, as opposed to answering specific questions about outcomes. The constructivist goal is to provide a fuller explanation of happenings beyond instrumental or "rationalist" explanations of means/ends or if/then. Martha Finnemore sums up her own approach as attempting to transcend "Why" questions of international politics, instead constructing "constitutive explanations of the type that answer the question, 'how possible?'"[120]

Not surprisingly, an evolutionary understanding of the social construction of international politics requires, by definition, some sort of timeline of inquiry.[121] Constructivists avoid being international historians by looking for claims and patterns which can be used broadly across historical and geographic periods, and across academic disciplines. Generally speaking, such claims lie in the universal entities of structure-agent constitution. But these claims are, in turn, inseparable from historical analysis. Afterall, the constructivist interest lies in understanding the process by which human beings shape, and are shaped by, their interactions in a myriad of international contexts. Instead of asking 'When will the other shoe drop,' constructivists, in my view, are motivated more by the old maxim from psychology that 'the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour.'[122] Constructivism thereby serves not just as a tool for understanding

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seems slightly disingenuous with this claim. Beyond the issue of the title of his major work (*Social Theory of International Politics*) the normative content of Wendt's arguments, while perhaps deeply embedded, have emerged more clearly in his recent essay on the inevitability of a world state, "Why a World State is Inevitable: Teleology and the Logic of Anarchy," *European Journal of International Relations* 9 no. 4 (December 2003). That paper has lent ammunition to critics - including fellow constructivists - who say agent-actors in Wendt's latest theoretical formulations are being forced along a particular path in a mechanistic fashion, against constructivism's foundational belief that "nothing is inevitable".
For this criticism see: Vaughn P. Shannon, "Wendt's Violation of the Constructivist Project: Agency and Why a World State is Not Inevitable," *European Journal of International Relations* 11, no. 4 (December 2005): 582. This may begin to raise the question of constructivism being a fully paradigmatic theory.

120 Finnemore quoted in David Dessler and John Owen, "Constructivism and the Problem of Explanation: A Review Article" *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no. 3 (September 2005): 600. Interestingly, although she is a leading constructivist with a practical inclination for studying policy change among international organizations, nonetheless Finnemore surrenders some ground on an important academic frontline in IR, one that political realism (especially neorealism) had held for many years. This is the claim that one or another theory has the capacity to *predict the future*. For her, the tools of constructivism are particularly useful for "their contribution to explanation, not prediction." Ibid.

121 Kennedy-Pipe, "International History," 753.

122 Dale Copeland captures this claim when he writes: "For Wendt and other constructivists, it is the past that matters – how interactions and gestures in the historical process have socialized actors toward certain conceptions of self and other. Realists certainly do not dismiss the way that past interaction shape current beliefs. Most fundamentally, however, realism is a forward-looking theory. States are rational maximizers of their security over the foreseeable future. Hence they remain

international politics but in practical terms as a *method of historical inquiry,* in which the dynamic constructions of international history are abstracted into theoretical conclusions. Reus-Smit quotes E.H. Carr, "A fact, he wrote, 'is like a sack – it won't stand up till you've put something in it.'"[123]

For all that, critics have accused constructivists of lacking rigorous empirical studies to back up their claims.[124] Others like Sheri Berman accept the growing number of constructivist case studies but believe "generalizable links among their findings remain sparse and thin."[125] However, Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, in a 2001 review of constructivism, self-consciously quoted a 1988 challenge of Robert Keohane ("Success or failure of the new approach would depend on its ability to inspire and support a vigorous program of empirical research.")[126]by claiming the challenge is met.

In one example, Laurie Johnson Bagby re-examined the life and lessons of Thucydides. She found that although he is often called "the first writer in the realist tradition"[127], Thucydides may be understood as an early constructivist whose histories promoted the possibilities of process-driven change.[128] And from the European canon, Mlada Bukovansky reexamined the French revolution and argued that its role in altering the international relations of Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries can best be described in ideational terms - as changes in the foundational beliefs concerning political legitimacy and sovereignty. Like many constructivists, Bukovansky

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constantly vigilant for any changes in their external situation that might damage their chances for survival later. Reduced to five words, then, the divide between constructivists and systemic realism is all about past socialization versus future uncertainty. Dale C. Copeland, "The Constructivist Challenge to Structural Realism: A Review Essay" in *Constructivism and International Relations: Alexander Wendt and his Critics*. eds. Stefano Guzzini and Anna Leander (New York: Routledge, 2006), 15.

123 Reus-Smit, "Reading History," 402.

124 In 1995, John Mearsheimer dismissed constructivism (which he called "critical theory") and one of its central figures by writing, "In fact, the distinguishing feature of the critical theory literature, Wendt's included, is its lack of empirical content."John Mearsheimer, "A Realist Reply," International Security 20, no. 1 (Summer 1995): 93.

125 Sheri Berman, "Ideas, Norms and Culture in Political Analysis" *Comparative Politics* 33, no. 2 (January 2001): 231. Berman may be misapprehending the nature of the constructivist project, however. Later she adds that constructivists should make predictability a goal of the school (p. 237), an ambition most constructivists would probably reject.

126 Finnemore and Sikkink, "Taking Stock," 391.

127 Bagby, "The Use and Abuse…" 131.

128 "For [Thucydides]...it is proof that, for better or worse, human beings can create their own world, instead of being created by it." Bagby, "The Use and Abuse…" 143.

doesn't reject the role of power and anarchy in her explanations. Instead, she points out that realist analysis tends to excessively concentrate on these as determinants of behaviour.[129]

Finally, by examining a wider historical and geographical range, constructivists are challenging the law-like claims of certain schools of international relations. By this I mean claims such as those of John Mearsheimer who argues, "realism has been the dominant discourse in world politics for well over a thousand years."[130] This is disputed by Neta Crawford. Her study looking at the interaction of Iroquois nations in 15th century North America found an early model of a security community that endured for over 300 years and which was founded explicitly on institutions of diplomacy.[131] Meanwhile, although IR theories are sometimes accused of being "myopic and ethnocentric",[132] many constructivists are seeking to amend these shortcomings. Adler and Barnett, whose edited work on security communities included research on Asia and elsewhere, conclude: "One objective of this volume was to break out of such stereotyping, to stop modelling the concept of security communities as if it were owned and operated by Europe."[133]

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129 Mlada Bukovansky, "The Altered State," 215.
130 Mearsheimer, "A Realist Reply," 92.
131 See Neta Crawford, "A Security Regime Among Democracies"
132 K.J. Holsti, "America Meets the 'English School': State Interests in International Society", *Mershon International Studies Review* 41, no. 2 (November 1997): 275.
133 Adler and Barnett, "Security Communities," 425.

CHAPTER THREE: THE IDEATIONAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE HIJAZ

3.0/THE STRUCTURE OF THIS CASE STUDY

The transformation of the political system of the Hijaz took place in a brief period during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad. I divide my study of these tumultuous years into several sections. In the first, I use a template of Kal Holsti (discussed in the introduction) to explicate the environment in which events occurred. I then follow with a phased look at the norm diffusion process used by the Prophet. Interspersed through this latter section, I look at Muhammad's transformation of several key social institutions. I end this chapter with a brief conclusion drawn from the case-study.

3.1/THE COMPOSITION OF THE HIJAZ SYSTEM IN 570 A.D.[134]

The 'System' Boundaries: an isolated Hijaz

The *Hijaz* is a slice of land on the Arabian peninsula running in a slight diagonal along the Red Sea coast. It's usually described as 3-400 kilometers wide and 1000 kilometers long making the region roughly the size of Germany. The Hijaz is mostly arid although parts are periodically verdant. Hijaz means "barrier", so named because a mountain range runs its length and separates the sea coast from the rocky plains on the other side. These heights receive occasional rains

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[134]I should take a moment to address the sensitive question of "orientalist" methods in western studies of Arabs, Islam and the Middle East. The definitive critique of "orientalism" as a coercive practice of knowledge-gathering/manufacture comes from Edward Said in his book of the same name: *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979). If I can briefly summarize Said's complex ideas, he describes Orientalism as a heavily value-laden exercise in which western academia became part of a broader campaign to regulate and control the orient. Images of Arabs and Muslims were/are sometimes presented crudely and framed by moralistic value-judgments, while at other times the orientalist portrayal is more subtle. However, all such studies share a common method of divorcing Arab and Muslim societies from their deep historical and social context, thereby making them seem totalizing and immortal in character -or, in the obverse, primitive. At its most basic, orientalism is a kind of cultural propaganda deployed to maintain the dominance of one group over another – in this case, of the civilized, rationalist west over the wild men and women of the east. Said makes clear that in many cases, orientalist practices are so deeply embedded in the scholar (who is reflecting the dominant myths of their own society) that he remains unaware of their presence. Said praises the work of scholars such as Watt and Esposito, which I use here, but has criticized others including Bernard Lewis, from whom I use portions of an edited volume. And in his later work on orientalist journalism, Said makes clear that this state of affairs continues through the present. So what is to be done? Thankfully, Said gives me a "get out of jail free" card: during an address at Queen's University in 1995, Said rejected a comment from the floor that suggested university libraries should dispose of their orientalist texts. He noted that most social science work is embedded with hidden assumptions, and that conversely, even the most explicitly orientalist work can be of value. The best path he advised, is to identity and make explicit the imprint of Orientalism on a work of scholarship, then proceed accordingly. It is beyond my ability to deconstruct the texts I use in this thesis. Nonetheless, I hope this brief section will stand as a reasonable caveat and acknowledgement of a serious problem.

which trickle down to settled communities below.

At the time of Muhammad's birth, the Byzantines in the northwest and the Sassanid Empire in the far east shifted warily around the periphery of the Hijaz. Neither power was interested in directly ruling the Hijaz,[135] their main concern being to contain the bedouin through the support of client regimes along the border.[136] Half-hearted attempts to politically manipulate the region's city-states had little influence on the substance of relations among the actors.[137]

Meanwhile, the wider Arabian peninsula was home to a people - the Arabs - who shared ethnic characteristics but were not a united social entity. The kingdoms of southern Arabia (now called Yemen) and northern Arabia were distinct from the Hijaz through linkages to different political spheres, unique modes of political organization, and specific dialects of Arabic.[138] Finally, considering the wide distances involved, we can see how Arabia proper was not a 'system' but a line of loosely-connected polities strung out along the Red Sea coast.[139]

At the time of Muhammad's birth, the Arab client states to the north and south were in steep decline. This instability increased the seclusion of the tribal polities of the Hijaz, such that Irfan Shahid refers to "the world of inner Arabia" in which nomadic bedouin concentrated their movements around the settled oasis cities.[140]Patricia Crone writes, "Geopolitically, the peninsula was simply a backwater...Inner Arabia thus remained all but innocent of foreign contamination."[141] In thus answering the question of the boundaries of the Hijaz 'system', we can say its isolation is sufficient to reflect Holsti's criterion of a separation "between interaction and

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135 Montgomery Watt believes that "with the available arms and means of communication it was a task beyond the strength even of a great empire." Watt, *Muhammad,* 5.

136 Ibid. 5-6

137 Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and The Rise of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 247-9. Crone dismisses the notion, suggested occasionally, that Muhammad's revelation was an anti-colonial effort to shake off the foreign domination of the imperial powers.

138 Giorgio Levi Della Vida,"Pre-Islamic Arabia" in *The Arab Heritage*, ed. Nabih Amin Faris (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), 41-43.

139 Sayyid Fayyaz Mahmud, *A Short History of Islam* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1960), 6.

140 Irfan Shahid, "Pre-Islamic Arabia" in *The Cambridge History of Islam,* 22.

141 Crone, *Slaves on Horses,* 23.

environment."

The Characteristics of the Units: the Tribe as Sovereign Entity.

In 570 AD, clans and tribes were the main actors of inner Arabia. The literature uses 'clan' and 'tribe' almost interchangeably (except in rare cases such as that of Mecca, where individual clans of the Quraysh tribe competed for influence). Within the Hijaz, the lines separating clans from tribes were blurry, as Karen Armstrong explains:

> [Clans] were united by a real or mythical common ancestry....These groups then allied themselves with others in larger and more tenuous associations; in the West we usually call the small groups 'clans' and the larger groups 'tribes'. The Arabs, however, did not usually make this distinction and used the word *qawm* (people) for both the larger and smaller groups.[142]

The clan was basically a material entity composed of several related family groups living and traveling together and sometimes totaling thousands of people. These small political units were an adaptation to the region's harsh environment:

> The people lived on the sparse and elusive greenery of the oases and the vanishing valleys and could never be sure of a long stay in any one place as neither the water nor the herbage was enough for the flocks. They lived, therefore, in tight, self-sufficient, and mobile communities whose existence depended on swift movement, on selfdefense, on fortitude, and on great stamina.[143]

Some clans settled in cities with modestly complex administrative functions and economic activities. Others remained nomadic and subsisted by herding and breeding livestock, raiding for booty, and providing protection services to the convoys of settled tribes.

Tribal/clan units were sovereign entities guided by an egalitarian system of chiefs who administered by moral authority based on legitimacy, rather than force.[144] This form of governance was maintained regardless of whether a tribe was nomadic or sedentary.[145] Tribal

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142 Armstrong, *Muhammad,* 58.
143 Mahmud, *A Short History*, 12.
144 Della Vida, "Pre-Islamic Arabia," 50. Maxime Rodinson indicates clan leaders were elected. Maxime Rodinson, *Muhammad* (London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2002)*,* 14.
145 De Lacy O'Leary, *Arabia Before Muhammad* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co.,1927), 183. Della Vida, "Pre-Islamic Arabia," 52.

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membership embodied a system of rights and responsibilities in a form we could recognize as citizenship. The norm of *asabiya*[146] governed common defence and stipulated that "...each member had to be ready to leap to the defense of a fellow-tribesman and obey his chief without question. Outside the tribe, most obligations ceased and there was no notion of a universal, natural law..."[147] Linked to *asabiya* was the law of vendetta[148] which stipulated that tribesmen would secure retribution for harm done to kin by outsiders. Under this code, the "clan regarded itself as a complete polity and recognized no external authority."[149]

Some tribal units gradually settled among oases where they developed an industry servicing trade caravans.[150] With the water route along the Red Sea treacherous for its reefs and piracy,[151] caravans of hundreds of camels regularly marched between southern Arabia and Abyssinia, through inner Arabia, up to Syria and beyond - a journey of over 2,000 kilometers.

The Polities of Inner Arabia: Mecca, Ta'if , Medina and the Bedouin.

Mecca sits 80km from the Red Sea coast at the midway point between southern Arabia and Palestine. In 570 AD, the community was dominated by the Quraysh tribe who prospered through outfitting and provisioning caravans. The city was founded at the site of the Ka'ba, a ramshackle polytheist shrine where tribes had long worshiped a piece of black volcanic rock. The shrine held a multitude of tribal idols and made Mecca a site of pilgrimage for all the Hijaz. The Ka'ba greatly contributed to Mecca's wealth. The city's residents paid a tax to maintain the shrine and show hospitality to visiting pilgrims[152] and the Meccans were concerned to safeguard these economic operations. In terms of government, most claim that tribal custom was maintained, with

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146 Lapidus, *A History,* 12.
147 Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 58.
148 Called *tha'r* in Arabic. Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 14.
149 Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies,* 12.
150 Shahid, "Pre-Islamic Arabia," 17. He calls this new form of community a "caravan-city", and it served a heavy trade in spices, leather, textiles, weapons and other goods
151 Glubb, *A Short History,* 24.
152 The Meccans are described as having been competent bankers, using a variety of currencies to ensure "payment could be made to many distant lands." They had turned Mecca into "a clearing house of international commerce" and provided for traders, as well, "insurance of the goods on a very perilous route." O'Leary, *Arabia Before…* 182.

Mecca's affairs administered by a version of a nomadic council of elders called a *mala* - an assembly of notable men over 40 years old. [153]

The agricultural community of Ta'if was two days camel-trek from Mecca. This walled city was the home of the Thaqif tribe where three brothers managed the community as an executive committee. Ta'if had been a rival of Mecca and, we're told, its people remained jealous of Mecca's prosperity. Tensions came to a head in 590 during The Wicked War, a quarrel over caravan routes in which Ta'if was defeated. Although the city remained an independent polity,[154] it was weakened by the struggle which compounded the effects of Mecca's economic penetration.[155]

The oasis city of Medina (earlier called *Yathrib*) was 11 days' camel trek north of Mecca.[156] The city is described as ringed by fortress-like homes belonging to wealthier members of the community. Medina was the first major stop on the northwards caravan route and its oasis supplied a modest agricultural market for date palms and "cereals".[157] The city also had "artisans" notable for their silverwork.[158] Medina was unusual in being multi-ethnic: home to three Jewish tribes and two larger Arab tribes, the Aws and Khazraj. By 570 AD, the Aws and Khazraj were stalemated in a civil war that had eroded the city's administrative and economic structure.

In the desert, the nomadic bedouin tribes endured harsh conditions: "[A]lways on the verge of starvation, never laden with worldly goods, robbery or raiding were their normal

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153 Others refer to this grouping as a 'senate', and some sources reportedly called Medina a republic, though this seems exaggerated. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies,* 17. Rodinson, *Muhammad,* 41. Lings, *Muhammad,* 28. O'Leary, *Arabia Before…* 183. A few argue that wealthy Meccan leaders governed the city as an "oligarchy". Della Vida, "Pre-Islamic Arabia," 52.

154 We find later that the Prophet Muhammad counted on Ta'if's independence: at one low point during his ministry, finding himself reviled and increasingly assaulted in Mecca, the Prophet traveled to Ta'if in hopes of securing permission to emigrate. He was refused, as we'll see. Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 108, 137.

155. Meccan notables had extensive real estate holdings in the community. Although we're also told Ta'if supplied Meccan markets with fruits and vegetables, and thereby likely retained some leverage. Watt, *Muhammad*, 8.

156 Lings, *Muhammad*, 7.

157 Watt, *Muhammad*, 84.

158 O'Leary, *Arabia Before…* 105. R.B. Serjeant, "The 'Sunnah Jami'ah,' Pacts With the Yathrib Jews, and The 'Tahrim' of Yathrib: Analysis and Translation of the Documents Comprised in The So-Called 'Constitution of Medina.'" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London* 41, no. 1 (January 1978): 4.

occupations."[159] As a result, "Their way of life centred round their camels, the eternal search for watering places, and the feuds which arose out of precedence or priority at these life-giving places."[160] This spare existence had one great benefit: the bedouin were masters of the desert and thus valued as allies in the protection of trading convoys and in proxy wars against enemies.

The foregoing is all to make a single point: the tribal actors of inner Arabia each had a *sovereign,* de-territorialized identity forged in the crucibles of a life-or-death existence. They each had distinctive interests (although these interests, as we'll see, could align and lead to temporary 'confederations'). Culturally, the tribes each had patron gods, manifested in idols, from whom they requested aid and protection. In sum, Patricia Crone broadly describes the 'sovereign' nature of these tribes: [B]ecause the Arabs had lived in freedom from ethnic and social disturbance since very ancient times, their mobility had given them a common identity such as other peoples acquire only through their state structures...the Arabs had their identity instead of states...[161]

The Material Structure of the System: Anarchy With a Meccan Hegemon

The defining feature of the material structure of inner Arabia in 570 AD was anarchy. Muslim scholars later referred to this period as *Jahiliya* - the "Age of Ignorance"[162]- described as "tribal pride and the endless tribal feuds, the cult of revenge, the implacability and all the other pagan characteristics".[163] As we'll see, tribal actors attempted to 'make something' of this condition but the reality remained: "There was no law to be observed, other than the law of

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159 Some scholars suggest the bedouin circulated around relatively permanent oases (although smaller in size, and not so permanent as to be considered towns). From these relatively stable locations, tribal chiefs ruled and managed the tolls on merchant caravans passing through their territory. If this is so, then bedouin life becomes slightly less nomadic and less deterritorialized then is often described and their 'sovereignty' would somewhat extend over a given physical space. See, Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991),10-11.

160 Mahmud, *A Short History...* 10.

161 Crone, *Slaves on Horses*, 25.

162 Salibi says this is a mistranslation. The real meaning, he believes, is a considerably less pejorative -and perhaps more accurate- phrasing, time of "tribal feuding" or "tribal conflict". Kamal Salibi, A History of Arabia (Beirut: Caravan Books, 1980), 12.

163 Mahmud, *A Short History...* iv.

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necessity and certain tribal customs and taboos, and there was no recognized authority to enforce any law."[164]

The Meccans prospered in this environment, such that "no one outside Mecca could pose a threat to Mecca's hegemony."[165] The city was secure and prosperous, even described by one scholar as "cosmopolitan."[166] The Quraysh of Mecca pursued a dual economic strategy of cross-desert trading while at the same time expanding the Ka'ba. By 570, more than 300 idols were located inside the renovated enclosure. Worshipers made pilgrimages to Mecca and other sites around the city, often participating in the trade and culture fair at Ukaz (the site of popular poetic contests). According to custom, violence was always forbidden inside the *haram* of a holy site, and everywhere in the *Hijaz* during the four-month truce for pilgrimages.[167] Mecca thus served as a sanctuary of safety that complemented its role as pilgrimage destination and economic hub.

To properly expand their trading empire, the Meccans had to tame the marauding bedouin who harassed the routes to Syria.[168] The Meccans employed a style of diplomacy known as *hilm*, described as "a patient and tireless cunning in the manipulation of men through the knowledge of their interests and passions."[169] The largest bedouin tribes were made 'confederates' through agreements called *ilafs* which stipulated a kind of profit-sharing in return for safe passage of the caravans.[170] The network of treaties assured protection of water and pasture rights for the caravans and a supply of guards, guides and scouts. More importantly, they gave Mecca a wide sphere of political and commercial influence: "In association with [these] tribes, a loose Meccan diplomatic hegemony was established in the desert.[171]" This hegemony was also reinforced by

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164 Balyuzi, *Muhammad,* 7-8.
165 Jorgen Baek Simonsen, "Administration in the Islamic State: An Interpretation of the Terms "Dhimma" and "Jizya" in *Islam: State and Society*, eds. Klaus Ferdinand and Mehdi Mozaffair, (London: Curzon Press, 1988), 84.
166 O'Leary, *Arabia Before...* 22.
167 Shahid, "Pre-Islamic Arabia," 24.
168 Salibi, *A History,* 74.
169 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 221. This definition seems slightly florid. Others describe *hilm* as meaning "statesmanship".
170 Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 109.
171 Lapidus, *A History...* 15.

troops. In the Fijar War, for instance, the Meccans assisted a client tribe enmeshed in business-related conflict. As later events would show, Mecca could field large armies to defend its interests (10,000 Meccan troops and confederates fought in the battle of "The Trench").[172]

Despite Mecca's strengths, this was still an anarchic system. Competition and challenges to Meccan hegemony were always possible. For instance, while Ta'if is described as doing a "roaring trade" selling produce and wines to Mecca,[173]one event in 570 reveals the fragility of their relationship. When an Abyssinian army approached Ta'if enroute to attacking Mecca, Ta'if tribesmen volunteered to act as guides and a scout gladly put the invaders on the correct route.[174] This willingness of Ta'if to betray their Meccan neighbors suggests simmering resentment against Meccan hegemony.

Other tribal actors were in frequent conflict among themselves. The civil war between the Aws and the Khazraj of Medina reached a climax in 618 at the Battle of Bu'ath with many killed on both sides. In the desert, we've already noted the tribal laws of defence and vendetta. Karen Armstrong views this as a mechanism intended to preserve the balance of power insofar as the killing of any one tribesman would necessitate the killing of a tribesman on the offending side and[175] a long and depleting conflict could result from subsequent blood-feuds.[176] The law of vendetta thus threatened "Mutual Assured Misery", if not destruction. At the same time, the fear of vendetta helped keep raids mostly bloodless. These raids also helped maintain the balance of power such that no single tribe could become overwhelmingly powerful in strictly material goods (that is, except for Mecca).[177] Alliances were also constantly in flux, perhaps because somebody had to be a victim of the raids in order to maintain the rough economy of the desert. This helps

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172I should mention one other form of Meccan influence, namely the capacity to award 'protection.' Any tribe could declare an outsider a 'protected person,' thereby acquiring responsibility for the individual's security on the same terms as if they were born-tribesmen.

173Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 35.

174Mecca's prestige soared after the invaders were defeated. Lings, *Muhammad,* 19-22.

175Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 59-60.

176Mahmud, *A Short History...* 14.

177Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 60.

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explain the strategy of desert tribes encamping around settled communities and besieging them for protection money.[178]

Applying a neorealist template, we can describe the system of inner Arabia as unipolar under a Meccan hegemon. The bedouin tribes caused havoc but were incapable of conquest and thus posed no existential threat to the settled tribes in Mecca, Ta'if and Medina.[179] Limited wars were fairly common, although, using neorealist terms, we can see evidence of the 'bandwagoning' of weaker tribes onto the dominant tribal actor. That is, bedouin tribes were keen to ally with Mecca, typically as guides and guards on convoys. Bought off in such a way, they joined themselves with the wealthiest and most powerful actor in the system. This would seem contrary to neorealist expectations that weaker actors balance *against* a hegemon, although this can be answered by saying the bandwagoners are simply biding their time before launching a challenge. In any case, apart from Mecca, inter-tribal competition continued unabated. Once again, contrary to predictions of neorealism, the actors of the Hijaz system don't seem to have placed security as their predominant goal (which according to Waltz is the normal preoccupation of actors under anarchy).[180]The actors instead engaged in *power*-maximizing by means such as alliances and raiding. Actors didn't seek to destroy others and therefore didn't face an existential risk. Instead, assured of their own survival as entities, they sought to secure benefits and control over resources (such as alliances, income accrued from protection activities, control of water sources, and so on). From the evidence, in 570 AD the political system of the Hijaz was stable and enduring.

Common Forms of System Interaction: Trade, War, Pilgrimage... and Poetry

Trade was a significant source of interaction. The bedouin needed food and manufactured goods while city dwellers needed - besides protection - camels: a practical and traditional

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178 Della Vida, "Pre-Islamic Arabia." 50.
179 Ibid.
180 Waltz, *Theory,* 126

measure of wealth. Fairs were an important opportunity for trading locally manufactured goods as well as imported materials. Moreover, cultural interactions were common. An important highlight of the fairs were poetic contests. The poets are described as partly propagandists and partly yellow journalists, recounting the glories of their tribe's exploits along with the often vulgar mockery of opposing tribes.

The literature indicates that most of the peaceful systemic interactions took place through the aegis of religious contact. In this way we can see that Mecca exercised a form of cultural hegemony to match its political power. Although every settled community had a shrine for its tribal idol and by custom every shrine was a sanctuary of safety, the Ka'ba stood out in this respect with the unique 'black stone' a widely-revered object of worship. Mecca's Ka'ba became something of a cultural salon for the Hijaz, as Lapidus writes, "a common sanctuary, also allowed for worship of the same gods, economic exchange, sociability, and political bargaining."[181] No other community in the region could provide the same religious, mercantile and political opportunities. The sanctuary of the large Ka'ba and the associated service industry made the city a superb gathering place for tribal actors.

3.2/THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE SYSTEM[182]

As we've seen, constructivist theory holds that a material structure of capabilities (the relative capacity under anarchy of each actor to do harm, in Kenneth Waltz's conception) is accompanied by another structure of ideas. This ideational structure gives meaning to the behaviour of actors and helps them interpret and predict systemic interactions; fundamentally, this structure helps actors define their identity and interests. Wendt calls this the "social structure"

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181 Lapidus, *A History...* 13.
182 I should note the paucity of information on tribal life in the *Hijaz* during the centuries prior to Muhammad's birth. Partly for this reason, it's beyond the scope of this project to try and explain changes amongst the actors in the distant past *prior* to 570. That is, I can't say with any certainty whether or not the system operating in the *Hijaz* had at one time been more or less harmonious, more or less integrated, and so on.

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of a system and considers it a distribution of ideas.[183] A particular distribution, Wendt says, forms a unique "culture" of anarchy of a given period or system (what Friedrich Kratochwil calls a "macro-level" structure.[184])

Mlada Bukovansky has defined international political culture in her study examining the normative impact of the French and American revolutions on the international system of 18th century Europe:

> The political culture of the international system is that set of implicit or explicit propositions, shared by the major actors in the system, about the nature of legitimate political authority, state identity, and political power, and the rules and norms derived from these propositions that pertain to interstate relations within the system.[185]

In describing the impact of new ideas on system-wide conceptions of political legitimacy, Bukovansky identified one particular element we might consider akin to a 'master norm'. This norm (actually a particular bundle of norms) governs the composition of actors in the system and thereby defines the nature of the system itself as it answers the question: a system of *what (or whom)*? She refers to this norm as *the hegemonic form of legitimate authority*.[186]

We should note here that 'legitimate authority' is the relational substance of sovereignty.[187] Such authority derives from both domestic sources (see footnote 234) and external interaction.

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183 Wendt, *Social Theory*, 249.

184 Friedrich Kratochwil, "Constructing a New Orthodoxy? Wendt's 'Social Theory of International Politics' and the Constructivist Challenge," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 1 (January 2000): 84

185 Bukovansky, *Legitimacy and Power Politics*, 2.

186 Ibid, 9. She also describes this as the "...form of rule considered to be the most powerful and legitimate..." When describing an idea as "hegemonic", Bukovansky refers to the dominance of one idea over others. This idea may be perpetuated by the most powerful state in the system, and she takes pains not to separate power from ideas; however the norm itself is widely shared - an intersubjective idea – that doesn't necessarily reduce to the coercive imposition of any one state upon others.

187 If we take a moment to explore this idea, we can say that legitimacy emerges from two sources. The first is domestic and inward-looking. In this case, authority comes from a particular relationship between the corporate actor and its polity (by 'corporate actor' I mean a 'government' who might be a council, a parliament or even an individual - such as an autocrat or sovereign - who represents the polity as an entity that is not reducible to its parts). The commonly-heard description in this sense is that the corporate actor is one holding the 'monopoly of force' within given boundaries. In this phrasing, legitimacy is conferred on the corporate actor by the folks who accept, through fear or assent (or both), the corporate actor's claim of rightful authority (and, therefore, sovereignty). This legitimacy is confirmed (or 'reproduced') by the daily behaviour of members of the polity inasmuch as they don't act to change the terms of their governance - including mass rejection of the symbols and myths of the corporate actor - through revolution or mass emigration.

If this understanding is turned around and faced to the outside world, we then have entities conferred with legitimate authority (still derived domestically) to behave as unitary actors viz-a-viz other actors in the international system. This explanation is along the same lines as Waltz, who defines sovereignty by writing: "To say that a state is sovereign means that it decides for itself how it will cope with its internal and external problems, including whether or not to seek assistance from others and in doing so to limit its freedom by making commitments to them." Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 96.

This external facet of "legitimate authority" emerges from the intersubjective recognition of other actors in the system and guarantees the sovereignty of an actor.[188] Daniel Philpott has developed a conceptual description of the norms governing which actors are recognized as legitimate members of an international system. He calls this, "the constitution of international society". The idea is similar to Bukovansky's, although Philpott adds to the utility by posing three theoretical questions which together define the 'master norm' (or "the hegemonic form of legitimate authority") of an international system. Philpott writes:

> [A] constitution of international society is a set of norms, mutually agreed upon by polities who are members of the society, that define the holders of authority and their prerogatives, specifically in answer to three questions: Who are the legitimate polities? What are the rules for becoming one of these polities? And, what are the basic prerogatives of these polities?[189]

Before answering these questions, it's important to restate and examine a foundational tenet of constructivist theory: a system's social structure is engaged in a simultaneous, mutual constitution with the primary beliefs held by actors in the system. Matthew Hoffman describes this by writing, "Mutual constitution is a fundamental social process that posits that actors create social structures through their actions and interactions, while, in turn, social structures influence who actors are, what they want, and what they do."[190]

As a practical matter, most individuals don't attend rallies shouting, "Hurrah for the nation-state form of legitimate authority!" There are mediating elements where groups and their beliefs form around more detailed and specific rule-based sets of behaviours which are influenced by, and reproduce, the ideational structure of the system. So, for example, Canadians come

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188 This explanation roughly coincides with Alexander Wendt's description of internal and external sovereignty (*Social Theory*, 206-9). Wendt later claims however (for what seems to me purely reasons of theory-building) that sovereignty is an intrinsic property in the same manner for states as -he says by way of example- height is intrinsic for a person. He later clarifies by saying the *right* to sovereignty can only be awarded by other actors in the system and this right, in being a notion intersubjectively held by the others, becomes an institution.280-3.In this latter explanation his view is consistent with Bukovansky's notion of the "dominant form of legitimate authority."

189 Daniel Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 12.

190 Hoffman, "Constructing a Complex World," 44.

together on July 1st to eat hot dogs, wear red shirts and celebrate Canada Day. This benign behaviour is a subtle product of the state-system of political organization, because in this expression of 'we-ness,' these individuals subtly reflect the foundational belief in the appropriateness of the modern state as a suitable repository of political authority. And at the same time their behaviour helps reinforce it in the world.[191] The actors are simultaneously being shaped by, and shaping, the international distribution of ideas.

What, then, are the channels along which this mutual shaping takes place? The simple answer is that social norms perform this function. Yet this answer is unsatisfying. Is "Canada Day" a social norm? It's partly composed of social norms, as we've seen, but there remains a nagging problem of under-explanation.[192] The widely varying usages of the term "norm" follow a similar pattern: norms tell us about expected behaviours, but not structured, specific patterned behaviour in given areas of activity. In other words, "norms" are vague and often hard to monitor empirically.

I argue the social structure of a system is maintained through social institutions. On this point, Philpott ably explains how institutions both shape identity and generate "social power" through the participation of actors in a given set of behaviours. He describes an institution as "a circumstance of reflection" in which actors have their identity firmed up while confirming the normative content of that identity.[193] The problem is, Philpott is inclined to limit the meaning of an "institution" to the literal sense of an administrative organization (such as a church or an NGO). He might describe the Olympics (a social institution) by describing the International

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191 That's not to say that some individuals won't simultaneously hold other allegiances that may even contradict the nature of the July 1st celebration: dual citizenship, sympathies with radical groups, contrarian motivations for participating (anti-Americanism) and so on. What counts for purposes of helping reproduce systemic norms is the behaviour at that moment on July 1st,, the mass participation being the moment a particular identity-formation is instantiated.

192 I wouldn't be the first to point out that definitional issues plague constructivist thought. Charles Tilly notes how constructivists wrestle with the meaning of "identity" and struggle to use the notion as an analytically useful concept. This despite "identity" being an important concept in constructivist theorizing. Tilly, "International Communities," 400. See also Finnemore and Sikkink, "Taking Stock", 398-9. This definitional confusion is a significant problem, although political realists have long coped with their vague definitions of "power".

193 Philpott, *Revolutions,* 54.

Olympic Committee (an institution with a physical presence); both are signposts of routinized behaviours however the "Olympics", *per se*, suggests a much wider spectrum of behaviour.

Oran Young adds to previous definitions by describing social institutions as "'social practices consisting of easily recognized roles coupled with clusters of rules or conventions governing the relations among the occupants of these roles."[194] This intertwining of norms and patterned behaviour is the key which opens windows into the changes I want to describe: we can watch ideas form by analyzing the behaviours giving them manifestation and watch as institutions fracture when the norms embedded in their makeup shift and transform. Also, the opportunities for "discourse" in such institutions present a chance to 'hear' the words of actors themselves during the transformation. Finally, institutional shifts help us see corresponding shifts in actor interests. After all, a change is hardly significant if it doesn't result in evidence of actors having altered their interests (and their beliefs about the mechanisms by which they can achieve them).[195]

The Structural 'Master Norm' of the Hijaz - 570 AD

Returning now to Philpott's questions: the "legitimate polities" of inner Arabia at the time of Muhammad's birth were the tribes who lived either in settled communities or as nomadic bedouin. As we've seen, two conditions were necessary to be considered a tribal actor. First, the group had to identify a lineage to a common ancestor. Secondly, the tribe had to be capable of meeting its responsibilities of *asabiya*, or common defence.[196] Finally, among the prerogatives of tribal actors were a bundle of norms including the right to form alliances and confederations, to extend protection to outside individuals, and to be free of interference from other tribes. This last

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194 Quoted in Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, "A Framework for the Study of Security Communities," in *Security Communities,* 41.

195 This separation is roughly similar to Keohane and Stein's typology of causal and principled beliefs.

196 Sergeant, "The Sunnah…" 21. Without this essential attribute, a group was helpless. The term *mufraj* describes an individual without protection, the phrase meaning "one found slain in the desert" - a stark discursive indication of the risks of 'going it alone.' The tribe also had secondary social responsibilities including care of orphans and the poor. For the purposes of this thesis however, I'm focusing on the central life-and-death issues of unit survival under anarchy.

norm may seem peculiar considering the violence that wracked the Hijaz over the continual violation of its precepts. Nonetheless, punishments for violations were stipulated in the moral code of Arab society (the law of tha'r, or vendetta) suggesting the 'natural' state of affairs was intended to be the preservation from bodily interference of the members of a tribe.

Social Institutions in the Hijaz Altered by Muhammad.

A number of social institutions shifted during the ideational transformation of the Hijaz. Muhammad successfully introduced new norms into these institutions, each one a piece of his larger project, constructing a new "master norm" for the system determining the "hegemonic form of legitimate authority." For this brief study, I examine three such institutions and the way in which Muhammad executed an alteration in their "constitutive norms"[197]: kinship/lineage, raiding, and alliances. These institutions were among those which were fundamental to the operation of the system and the maintenance of the dominant form of political legitimacy in the Hijaz. Moreover, all have sufficient historical material for us to examine their transformation during Muhammad's lifetime. There is a fourth institution also valuable for this study, although in a different way from the others: the practice of Arabian poetry was a widely popular art form and offers a snapshot of the norms of identity and legitimacy in the system. The evolution of this institution demonstrates certain discursive adaptations to new norms put forth by Muhammad.

There is a growing body of constructive research which describes in detail the process by which new norms gradually become embedded in institutions. Once institutionalized, these norms can alter attitudes, preferences, and - ultimately - identities. I've summarized from the literature several "phases" which stand out as signposts and are a useful guide for the process

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197 Constitutive norms are defined as those norms "which create new actors, interests, or categories of action." They are said by some to be distinct from purely "regulative norms" which "order and constrain behaviour." I would argue however that the distinction is not always clear - particularly in the case of the three social institutions I've chosen to model. Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics," 891.

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we're scrutinizing.

3.3/MUHAMMAD'S IDEATIONAL REVOLUTION

Muhammad was born in Mecca to a clan of the ruling Quraysh tribe. In adulthood, Muhammad worked as a manager of trading caravans, running camel caravans into Syria and beyond. His wife (and former boss) was a caravan financier whose wealth could have guaranteed Muhammad a comfortable future. Yet a deep discontent often led Muhammad to a cave on Mount Hira just outside Mecca where he prayed and meditated. And it was inside this cave, in 610 AD, that he claimed the Archangel Gabriel revealed that he - Muhammad - was to become a Prophet of God to humanity: "Recite; and thy Lord is the Most Bountiful, He who hath taught by the pen, taught man what he knew not."[198] The vision sent Muhammad fleeing home in terror, fearing he'd lost his mind.[199] But the encouragement of his family soon convinced him otherwise and they became the first Muslims of Islam. In this early period, Muhammad took on the role of a "warner" - demanding Arab tribes care for their poor and warning of a coming Judgment Day. "So for the orphan, oppress him not, and for the beggar, repel him not..."[200] This was also a subtle warning that the weakening tribal system was perilously near collapse.

Phase 1: A Crisis Of Legitimacy Sets The Stage For Reform.

Kathryn Sikkink notes that new beliefs "do not enter an ideological vacuum, but rather a highly contested political space full of preexisting beliefs and values".[201] The question becomes, how does one set of ideas become selected over another? Why would Muhammad's early preaching find any reception in prosperous Mecca? The answer lies in part with the notion of "persuasiveness." Sikkink quotes Peter Hall as noting, "[W]hat makes an idea persuasive is the

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198 Lings, *Muhammad*, 44.
199 Lings, *Muhammad,* 45.
200 Ibid.
201 Kathryn Sikkink, "Development Ideas in Latin America: Paradigm Shift and the Economic Commission for Latin America" in *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essay on the History and Politics of Knowledge,* eds. Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1997), 229.

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way the idea relates to the economic and political problems of the day."[202] Scholars studying the development of security communities have come to similar conclusions about how social or material pressures encourage ideational change. Michael Barnett and Emanuel Adler argue that "precipitating conditions" must typically be present before new ideas gain a foothold in an environment: 'shocks' in a social environment "produce changes in material structure, mindsets and sensibilities, and new ways of thinking about organizing political life."[203]

Prior to Muhammad's revelation, changing social and economic conditions in the Hijaz were already destabilizing the beliefs constituting the legitimizing norms of the system. This environmental factor helps explain why Muhammad's reformist message proved attractive and partly answers the question, "Why now?" The content of the Prophet's preaching during these early years of his prophethood was largely reformative - a critique of the existing system, rather than an alternative. And as discursive evidence demonstrates, the system was already regarded by some as lamentably defective.

Normative Tensions in the Tribal System on the Eve of Islam's Birth

The poets of the Hijaz were revered for their tribal homages. The most distinguished poems claimed top prize at the annual Meccan-run Ukaz fair[204] and were sometimes honored by being hung in the Ka'ba. These *Mu'allaqat*, or hanging poems, are considered a good representation of pre-Islamic Arab poetry.[205] Each follows a structured style. This poem is a *fakhr*, a tribal boast celebrating a victorious battle:

And we struck them with our spears with such force that
the shafts wobbled in their bodies as a buck wobbles
in a deep well.

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202 Ibid. 235.
203 Adler and Barnett, "A Framework…", 51
204 We can note the suggestion here of an intersection between power and ideas: the Meccans had grown rich living off the practices of the tribal system and its associated norms and rites. There is no doubt that later Meccan opposition to Muhammad (as we'll see) related to Meccan fears of losing both political *and* economic hegemony.
205 Jonathan A.C. Brown, "The Social Context of Pre-Islamic Poetry: Poetic Imagery and Social Reality in the Mu'Allaqat," in *Arab Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 35.

And we disposed of them in a manner that only God can
comprehend, and there is no blood vengeance left to be taken
by those who fought.[206]

In addition to bold assertions of tribal valour, there are also celebrations of tribal generosity. This attitude is sometimes described as "tribal humanism"[207]and it was an important part of the normative belief that one should contribute to the general welfare:

[And all the tribes of Ma'add know] that we are those
who protect [the hungry] in every year of famine, and that
we are givers to those who ask gifts of us.

[And all the tribes of Ma'add know] that we are those who
feed others when we are able, and that we are the destroyers
when tested.[208]

These poems exhibit a major intersubjective belief constituting the tribal code of the Hijaz – namely, 'manliness' and 'honour.' These are what some constructivists call 'constitutive norms,' norms which define a thing, *in its being, ontologically.* As chess cannot be chess without its unique rules (to paraphrase Wendt) so these discourses demonstrate norms which define what it means to be a fully-joined part of an Arab tribe.

Poetry was a reflection, in discourse, of this collective identity. This group identity subsumed the identities of individual members into the whole. Ira Lapidus elaborates by writing, "The clan defined the mental universe of the bedouin. Poetry expressed a fundamental devotion to the prestige and security of the group; without the clan, the individual had no place in the world."[209]

This idealized concept of clanship was shifting dramatically by the time Muhammad was born. Key elements in the tribal framework were under strain as growing material wealth among a few tribes nurtured individualistic greed and pushed aside normative responsibilities for the

206*Ibid*. 38. Arab poetry was meant to be recited aloud to an assembled audience.
207Esposito, *The Straight Path,* 6.
208Ibid. 42.
209Lapidus,*A History…,* 13.

weak and poor. Moreover, the codes of unquestioned defence and vendetta were destroying the Hijaz. In a strange twist, the Arabs of the Hijaz were suffering simultaneously from lack of attention to one key norm and by inflexible obedience to another. Let's look at each.

The success of commercial activity had the effect of weakening tribal bonds and eroding notions of tribal humanism. For instance, Meccan bankers loaned excess capital at high rates of interest to naive or desperate bedouin. Those unable to repay their debts were sold into slavery.[210] Their impoverished tribesmen were helpless - no code of self-defence could prevail over the rules of the markets. Slums formed around Mecca's periphery, home to orphans and others from starving or bankrupt clans and tribes.[211] Wealth was no longer shared and the economic egalitarianism which had characterized desert life was neglected in the city. Meccan families now concentrated on business interests and the prestigious (and lucrative) duties of caring for pilgrims to the Ka'ba.[212]

Around this time, the *Su'luk* poets appeared.[213] Although they composed their work within the established technical framework of Arabian poetry, they rejected accepted tribal motifs and implicitly condemned the artificial celebrations of "ease, abundance, satiety, communal eating and drinking [and] the protection and propagation of the tribe."[214] These poets attacked the growing materialism among Arab tribes with verses which "negated the basic principles of tribal life.... expressions of the futility of accumulating herds and goods and of the inevitability of death."[215]

Muhammad's earliest revelations – or warnings – were directed against this growing

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210 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 36.
211 Balyuzi, *Muhammad,* 14. Periodic famines would grip the Hijaz from time to time, making more desperate the situation for nomadic tribes. Lings, *Muhammad,* 24, 39.
212 Watt, *Muhammad*, 49.
213 The definition of the word varies and is in dispute: poor, unpropertied, vagabond, traveler, or robber.
214 Suzanne Pinckeny Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 89.
215 Ibid.118

materialism in his community.[216] Muhammad pointed the following revelation at Mecca's oligarchs, a verse reflecting the growing tensions over changing social conditions in Mecca and elsewhere:

> Beware! You do not honor the orphan,
> Nor urge to feed the poor.
> Greedily you devour the inheritance [of the weak],
> And you love riches inordinately.[217]

But the greatest threat to the legitimacy of the tribal system was arising in the growing violence of desert life, whereas several key tribal norms - codes of defence and vendetta, meant to ensure security - were increasingly dysfunctional and dragging tribes into endless cycles of conflict. In part, this was due to the old tribal alliance system. Mecca's expanding trade network required a long line of confederate tribes to help ensure the security of the caravans. But the traditional terms by which these alliances were established – essentially, the tribal obligations of defence were extended to allied groups – made war an obligation for all parties in case of an attack on any one of the members.

The problem grew acute as the expanding population of the Hijaz meant tribes came into more frequent interaction. The region became a social powder-keg as any spark of violence could escalate into a series of obligatory revenge killings, dragging in allies from across the Hijaz. The tribal confederation of Wa'il broke apart in a war over a stolen camel (the War of Basus). The Ghatafan confederation split over the outcome of a dispute over a horse race (the War of Dahis). In both cases, the feuds lasted for decades and took many lives.[218] And in Medina, where entire tribes lived among one another, the result was a cascading succession of blood-feuds. Clearly, a desert code intended for isolated groups could no longer meet the needs of

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216 Fazlur Rahman says Muhammad's mission to proclaim the unity of God – monotheism – was from the outset linked together "with a humanism and a sense of social and economic justice." Rahman, *Islam,* 12.

217 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 89. Passage from the Quran.

218 Salibi, *A History…,* 68. Despite the apparently flimsy pretexts of the violence, Salibi notes that the roots of the conflict were in fact "over meager pastures and watering rights".

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settled communities living in constant interaction with one another.[219] The tribe, as a unit of well-

being, was a failure.

The Su'luk's captured the tensions clawing at the tribal norms. This poet is awaiting death

by sword or starvation in the senseless violence of tribal warfare:

Meager his sip of sleep, his greatest care
the blood of vengeance or the encounter withdrawal
a foe fully armed and iron-helmeted;

Meager his provision store,
but one drink remaining;
his ribs jut out, his gut sucked in...

However long I live, indeed I know
that I will meet death's spearhead,
glistening, bare,

Taken unawares or openly, outnumbered by a foe
who prolongs the death match
'till the end."[220]

Phase 2: Muhammad Enters The System As a 'Norm Entrepreneur'

We can now start to answer, "Why Muhammad?" Other monotheists also preached in the

Hijaz and several others were also proclaiming themselves as prophets.[221] Yet the literature

indicates they had little social influence. Why did Muhammad achieve a unique measure of

prominence?

According to a useful study by Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, the norm-

entrepreneur - sometimes called a "meaning manager" or "meaning architect" - is one whose

rhetorical and tactical ability helps successfully introduce a new idea into an otherwise closed

environment. Acting on deeply-held beliefs concerning behaviour in their community, norm-

entrepreneurs "call attention to issues or even 'create' issues by using language that names,

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219 As Watt notes, the norms of *lex talionis,* "though useful for maintaining a degree of public order in desert conditions, were
    unworkable in the confined space of an oasis..."Watt, *Muhammad*, 39.
220 Ibid.90
221 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 66-7.

interprets, and dramatizes them. Social theorists refer to this reinterpretation or renaming process as 'framing'."[222]

An important part of this 'framing' process is expressing ideas in a manner that 'fits' within the existing normative context.[223] Muhammad's teachings accomplished this in both form and content. In form, Muhammad adopted a style of preaching widely known to the Arabs of the Hijaz as that of a *kahin* or fortune-teller. According to linguists, Muhammad's early revelations are composed using the *kahin's* manner of short, disjointed phrases delivered in a particular rhyming style called *saj*.[224] Muhammad's prophecies and warnings would seem familiar to his Meccan listeners.[225]

In content, as we've discussed, Muhammad's teachings initially seemed more reformist than radical. Complaints about Meccan materialism were prevalent and as we've seen in the selections of Su'luk poetry, concerns over the decline in tribal values were being disseminated. Muhammad had therefore established a message congruent with a stream of critical thinking already extant in the Hijaz. In keeping with Hall's notion of persuasivness, Muhammad's message appealed as a *reform* of tribal norms, demanding Meccans return to original tribal values of egalitarianism and generosity.[226]

Watt believes Islam also gained in appeal partly from Muhammad's personal qualities, such as courage, impartiality, generosity and the religiosity of his actions and statements.[227] This account corresponds with Finnemore and Sikkink's observation that a norm entrepreneur increases their authority by exhibiting several key traits including empathy (sharing the feelings of others), altruism (risking their own well-being for others), and a firm ideational commitment to

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222 Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics," 897.
223 Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics," 908.
224 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 58, 81. For details of the *saj* style, see 95.
225 A poet named Tufayl is said to have enrolled into Islam after hearing Muhammad reveal a portion of the Quran and being struck by the beauty of the words and phrasing. Lings, *Muhammad,* 54.
226 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 97.
227 Watt, *Muhammad*, 231.

their cause (that is, supporting the new norms even if they are not directly benefiting).[228] By rejecting the material comforts to which he was entitled as a wealthy member of the tribal hegemon and refusing the generous inducements offered by his brethren to amend his teachings, poverty and persecution actually increased Muhammad's influence and credibility, further sharpening his image as someone 'staking it all' on his claims.

Muhammad's early revelations were setting the stage for the complete systemic transformation that was to come. Muhammad's rejection of polytheism represented a conceptual rejection of an important belief underlying the tribal system. Ira Lapidus writes: "Whereas the polytheists envisaged a society in which people were divided by clan and locality, each with its own community and its own gods, the monotheists imagined a society in which common faith made men brothers in the quest for salvation."[229]

Muhammad's early success and early opposition

Sometime around 613 AD, the Angel instructed Muhammad to widen his audience beyond family members. His subsequent converts were an assortment described as "rootless migrants, poor men, members of weak clans and younger sons of strong clans – those people most dissatisfied with the changing moral and social climate of Mecca, for whom the Prophet's message proved a vital alternative."[230] By this description, some of these earliest believers might perhaps have viewed an alliance with the new faith – and its prophet - as materially advantageous. After all, Muhammad was wealthy and still enjoyed the physical protection of his clan.

This would partly explain early Meccan skepticism of Muhammad's faith. A group of

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228 Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics," 897. These authors also list types of norms most likely to win adoption. The list includes "universalistic claims about what is good for all people in all places" and "clear and specific, rather than ambiguous and complex". 906-7.

229 Lapidus, *A History...* 17. For her part, Patricia Crone writes: "[Muhammad's] monotheism amounted to a political programme. ...the turning point of Muhammad's career as a prophet came when he began openly to attack the ancestral gods of Quraysh and to denounce his own ancestors. This was a turning point because in so doing he attacked the very foundation of his own tribe..." Crone*, Meccan Trade*, 241.

230 Lapidus, *A History...* 21.

elders said to Muhammad during a gathering of the assembly, ``[W]e see among your followers only the basest and most foolish of us all. We see no virtue in you more than in ourselves.''[231] As events unfolded however, these new believers faced considerable persecution. The African slave Bilal was tortured by his master - kept under the sun beneath heavy rocks - until making a delirious recantation (Bilal was later accepted back into Islam). This example suggests the complex way in which new beliefs can reshape identities and, therefore, interests. Montgomery Watt notes:

> No doubt all these men followed Muhammad because they thought the teaching of the Quran was true. When we look at the fact as external observers, however, we note that all...had suffered in some way from the selfishness and unscrupulous dealing of the great merchants, and had therefore presumably seen in the ideas of the Quran a possible way out of their tensions and troubles.[232]

Neoliberal views broadly suggest beliefs serve as road maps for pre-formed interests of utility maximization. This poses a challenge because at the point of individual consciousness it becomes difficult to separate interests and goals from deeply-held beliefs. Finnemore and Sikkink note the chicken-and-egg dilemma in this sort of debate.[233] Finnemore concludes that beliefs and interests can be analytically indivisible and instead she conspicuously places belief prior to the outward expression of interests then asks 'what belief shaped this interest?' And when interests change she asks, 'what new beliefs led to this redefinition?' Her theoretical argument becomes, "People changed their minds about what was 'in their interests' not because of material facts but because of social interaction and persuasion."[234]

By way of explaining behaviour, then, Finnemore seeks to replace 'causality' with 'reasons for action,' explaining that beliefs "constitute the possibilities of behaviour" and do not strictly

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231 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 103.

232 Watt, "Muhammad", 36.

233 They write, "One could model rational choice as producing social knowledge as easily as one could model social context as background for rational choice, depending on the empirical question being researched." Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics..." 911. (Finnemore does note a body of psychological research suggesting some forms of attraction are indeed 'pre-conscious.' Martha Finnemore, *The Purpose of Intervention,* 157. By "pre-conscious," she means judgments made "prior to formal cognitive assessments."

234 Ibid. 38.

lead to outcomes in the mechanistic fashion of rationalist arguments that suggest "if-then."[235] Finally, she reconfigures the meaning of "interest" among groups seeking normative change. Finnemore refers to the interests of such groups as being their "social purpose" - a phrase intended to entwine interest and belief (if nothing else, the beliefs of groups are more apparent than the motivations of specific individuals).[236]

In our case study, we can contrast explanations by returning to observed variables: that is, by questioning the underlying distribution of power and inquiring about the role of power, if any, in shaping belief. It is in this sense of speaking to realism that we can ask, 'Can the change of belief among a significant segment of Meccans be accounted for by a shift in underlying power arrangements?' No, seems the answer. Polytheist Meccans remained firmly in control of the environment. On a basic level, it stretches credulity to imagine the new Muslims foreseeing Islam's distant victory. On the contrary, their choice to enrol in Islam caused them deprivation and suffering, including nearly existential alienation from Mecca's Ka'ba-based social life.[237]

The new Muslims may have remained self-interested individuals, but their interests – at this early stage in Islamic history - seem reconfigured in such a way as to be nearly incomprehensible to materialist description. Meanwhile, the cultural, political, and coercive powers of the hegemon seemed unable to quash these "interests" from embedding in a new form of "social purpose."

The Meccans were soon rocked by the defection to Islam of two prominent young men from a clan known to be hostile to Muhammad's clan. By becoming Muslims, these young men sent a powerful signal through the Hijaz. Namely, that "Islam overrode feuds of families and

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235 Ibid. 15. "Beliefs constitute the possibilities of behaviour. 'How possible' is the question they answer."
236 By this reckoning it's possible to view all Meccans as sharing the "social purpose" of strengthening their tribe and city but differing as to which belief set best served this intent. Many of the polytheist Meccans, we're told, rejected Islam because they feared it would deter pilgrims from visiting the Ka'ba, a critical source of revenue for the city. Is their rejection class-interest? Or civic virtue? Lings, *Muhammad*, 53. Glubb, *A Short History...* 34.
237 Balyuzi, *Muhammad,* 25-6.

clans."[238] As we've seen earlier, feuds were an integral part of the norms governing tribal life. The tribesman was expected to faithfully stand by his kin. The clan-crossing of these new believers awakened the Meccan leadership to the reality of the new faith's capacity to subvert a key legitimizing norm of the system: militarized obedience to tribal authorities. Shocked Meccans now accused Muhammad of "dividing families"[239] with his teachings.[240]

In response to this and other outrages, [241] Mecca's clans instituted a boycott of Muhammad's clan and demanded the protection over Muhammad be lifted.[242] The patience of Muhammad's kin ended in 619 AD upon the death of Muhammad's uncle and protector, Abu Talib. Despite Talib's sympathy for Islam, he refused to abandon his family's idols. Thus, when asked about the fate of Talib's soul, Muhammad replied that his uncle was in Hell. The new clan chief "was furious at such want of family feeling and withdrew his protection from the black sheep."[243] Muhammad now faced grave personal risk (Meanwhile, Muslims from weaker clans and unprotected believers, such as slaves, were tortured. Some abandoned their faith and others fled to southern Arabia).

Phase 3: New Norms Secure an Organizational Base and Begin Infiltrating Social Institutions

Martha Finnemore's research has shown that a new norm being introduced into a system has considerably greater salience if, first, it obtains an organizational home and, secondly,

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238 Balyuzi, *Muhammad,* 25.

239"Like Jesus, Muhammad seemed to be turning father against son, brother against brother, and undermining the essential bonds, duties and hierarchy of family life." Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 106.

240The Meccans also tried a gentler approach. A delegation of notables offered him a substantial bribe to put aside his preaching and return to the fold. Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 105

241 Although Islam was still nascent, Muhammad's teachings had begun to have a noticeable impact on other social institutions such as the highly political institution of marriage. Families in the Hijaz often used marriage for strategic purposes, such as cementing inter-clan relationships, mending rifts, or making connections with key families of higher status. Martin Lings writes: "A great man must be greatly in demand as an ally and a protector, which meant that he must himself have reliable allies. This he could partly contrive by weaving for himself, through his own marriages and the marriages of his sons and daughters, a network of powerful and formidable connections (Lings, *Muhammad,* 65.) One Meccan clan chief saw two carefully arranged marriages destroyed when the couples became Muslims. (Lings, *Muhammad,* 72-4). As this pattern repeated among families, it threatened to weaken alliances and disrupt the efforts to map out a stable political future for the tribe.

242 And the poets did their work. A female enemy of Islam wrote this ode about Muhammad: "We disobey the reprobate/Flout the commands he doth dictate/And his religion hate." Recorded in Lings, *Muhammad,* 90.

243 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 135.

becomes embedded into an operational social institution.[244] This finding comprises part of the research that comprised Finnemore and Sikkink's "norm life cycle" argument.

Their research shows that successful norm entrepreneurs use an organizational platform as point from which to launch their new norms.[245] Its stability and material presences gives a boost to the persuasive power of the norm entrepreneur and helps them fulfill their original mission of normative subversion: to seize the interest of actors and "take what is seen as natural or appropriate and convert it into something perceived as wrong or inappropriate."[246] This explains why the move to Medina marks the start of Muhammad's *active* subversion of the 'master norm' in the Hijaz system.

We've seen earlier that this concept is also called "the hegemonic form of legitimate authority" (Bukovansky) and the "constitution of international society"(Philpott). Both phrases refer to the means by which political authority is legitimized within a system. From this point forward, Muhammad worked to disrupt a myriad of social institutions sustaining the ideational structure of the Hijaz such that the answer to the question, "Who is a systemic actor?" would shift from the tribe to the *umma*. His tools would certainly include force of arms. Much more effective, however, would be his normative powers of persuasion along with his infiltration and alteration of social institutions that defined life for the Arabs of the Hijaz. He would redefine the terms of legitimacy by which the community of Arabs was ruled, beginning in a purely 'domestic' fashion and then working outwards. Karen Armstrong writes:

> All the different tribes of the oasis were to bury their old enmity and form, as it were, a new super-tribe. ... God was the head of the community and the only source of security (*dhimma*). As for the Muslims, they formed an entirely new kind of group. All the tribes were 'one community [*umma*] to the exclusion of all other men.' Hitherto the tribe had been the basic unit of society; the *umma*, however, was a community which was based on

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244 An illustrative example from our modern era can be found in Finnemore's case-study of Robert McNamara and the normative transformation of the World Bank. Martha Finnemore, "Redefining Development at the World Bank," in I*nternational Development and the Social Sciences.*
245 Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics..." 899.
246Ibid. 900.

religion rather than on kinship.[247]

Finnemore and Sikkink call the deliberate manipulation of social institutions "strategic social construction".[248] In the coming pages, we'll examine Muhammad's role in altering three of those institutions: kinship, raiding and alliances.

Muhammad Establishes the Muslim State in Medina

The tribes of Medina had spent decades locked in a spiral of blood-feuds. Although the dynamics of Medinese life differed from Mecca, both cities faced a similar challenge managing the shift from nomadism to settled life.[249] The Medinese now saw that peaceful community life was unobtainable if the members maintained tribal codes that dragged them into conflict through kin-obligations - facing war every time a hothead cousin drew a sword in a market quarrel.[250]

> [W]ithin the traditional framework of Arab society, inherited from the laws of the desert, it was impossible to break free of the vicious circle of feuds and counter-feuds. The workings of group solidarity, and the constantly changing alliances made by the clans could lead to a general war that would prove disastrous for all.[251]

Medina's elders resolved to install Muhammad as the community's leader. His proven ability to bring together rival clans into Islam had demonstrated unique peacemaking abilities that the Medinese badly needed.[252] In 622 AD, after a series of negotiations, a delegation gathered outside Mecca and signed an agreement of obedience and protection to the Prophet and the Muslims. This led to the emigration, or *hijra*, of many Meccan Muslims. According to scholars, such a move was unprecedented: while tribal confederacies were common, Muhammad and his

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247 Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 154.
248 The two authors draw a parallel between the methodical strategies of an actor seeking to implant a new norm into a system and the cost-ends benefit analysis used by the rational actors of neoliberal theories. As they note, "The utilities of actors could be specified as social or ideational as easily as they can be material."Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics" 910.
249 Watt observes, "[I]n both towns men from a nomadic background, and still retaining much of the social, moral and intellectual outlook of the desert, were attempting to live a very settled life."Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman,*100 Lapidus notes, by this time, "[Medina's] social life came increasingly to be dictated by spatial proximity rather than by kinship." 22-3.
250 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 142.
251 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 141.
252 Watt, M*uhammad: Prophet and Statesman.* 89.

fellow Muslims were permanently renouncing blood ties to their Meccan kin.[253] In this way, the *hijra* is viewed today as less a physical move then a psychological shift by Meccan and Medinese believers who departed from old ways of thinking to unite their new Islamic "family".

A series of agreements between Muhammad and the Medinese, collectively called the Constitution of Medina, subsequently helped graft the Prophet's normative mission to promote Islam onto a formalized administrative structure capable of training, regulating and protecting the corps of believers. In these agreements, we can see how Finnemore and Sikkink's "organizational platform" proves valuable: From the practical standpoint of international politics, the community of Muslims could now engage in the system as a full actor. But more importantly, the Constitution codified (and exemplified to the Arabs) the normative revolution Muhammad sought to effect throughout the Hijaz.

And in fact the documents established a new concept in the region: a pluralistic state based upon the bedrock polity of a religious community, the *umma*.[254] The "city" was now the focus of political and social life, with the administration of justice removed from individuals and tribes and placed in the hands of the unified community.[255] Medina was described as a political community composed of Muslims in cooperation with allies (such as the Jewish tribes recognized as holders of a "bond from God,"[256]) and polytheists tolerated under the protection of pre-Islamic clan agreements signed with Muslims. Medina became a "'citizenry' distinct from the rest of the peoples of the world."[257]

Muhammad established the normative core of the future Islamic empire by re-conceptualizing the identity of his believers and laying the foundation for a theocratic state

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253 Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 150.
254 Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*. 95.
255 Yetkin Yildirim, "Peace and Conflict Resolution in the Medina Charter," in *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* 18, no. 1 (2006): 112.
256 Sergeant, "The Sunnah…" 4, 8.
257 Yildirim, "Peace and Conflict…" 111.

(which would soon supplant the purely political entity of the city). The Muslims in this conception became a "super-tribe"[258]. In a recalibration of existing tribal codes, the Muslims now pledged to defend one another - regardless of past ethnic affiliation - in case of attack; enemies arising inside the community were to be regarded as castoff outlaws.[259]

Lapidus captures the dual intent of the Constitution by writing:

> Thus, one dimension of Muhammad's work was to communicate the shared beliefs, common social norms, and common rituals that were the basis of a community transcending the clan and tribe. The other aspect of his work in Medina was to build the political confederation that would extend his reforms to Mecca and to the rest of Arabia.[260]

Muhammad's "religious mission", expressed at this point via revelation and (more discreetly) in the Constitution, lay in modeling the Islamic "culture of sovereignty".[261] In this sense, God is regarded as sovereign - "the source of all authority" - whose will is carried out in the political realm by the leadership of the *umma*.[262] Bayerd Dodge writes,

> "...Muhammad took the place of a parliament as he legislated laws by Quranic revelation. He served as the judiciary, for important cases were brought to him for legal decision. He was also the executive power, since the people delegated to him both the administration of their tribal affairs and relationships with foreign rulers."[263]

Muhammad thus occupied a dual role. On the one hand, as the channel for God's revelation, the Prophet was an infallible legislator of divine law. On the other however, he was the fallible political manager, similar to a tribal leader, with authority based upon consensual leadership rather than control. This hybrid role helped Muhammad to find support for his prophetic mission by framing his *personal* leadership in terms recognizable to the average Arab

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258 Muhammad also separated this new "tribe" into two "clans", although this division seems arguably to have been administrative/functional rather than substantive: the *Muhajirun*, or Meccan Muslims, and the *Ansar*, or Medinese Muslims.

259 "[The Muslims] hands are against him as a body, even if he be the son of one of them."Sergeant, 19. And: "The security (*dhimmah*) of all (for life and property) is one – the lowliest/least of them (the *Mu'minun*, etc.) being (competent) to give protection on behalf of them (all)." *Ibid*.

260 Lapidus, *A History...* 26.

261 Laura Ephraim, "Systemic Secularism: Rethinking the Culture of Sovereignty in Constructivist IR Theory," Unpublished paper. Presented at the 2007 International Studies Association Conference, Chicago: 13

262 Alexander S. Cusdi and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, "Introduction," in *Islam and Power*, eds. Alexander S. Cusdi and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 8-9.

263 Bayard Dodge, "The Significance of Religion in Arab Nationalism," in *Islam and International Relations,* ed. J. Harris Proctor (New York: Praeger, 1965), 96.

of the Hijaz. Odd as it may seem, believers occasionally queried Muhammad as to whether a particular decision was a revelation from God or instead the personal judgment of the Prophet.[264] On several occasions, the Prophet yielded to the worldly advice of better-informed compatriots. [265] Acting in this way, as an earthy, chief-like figure, helped new believers grasp Muhammad's more expansive claims. In other words, the earthly and traditional role of super-tribal leader helped "fit" the new, broader norms of religious-based legitimacy into the constrained understandings of the believers:

> The *umma* redefined the meaning of the tribe as a group that defended its brothers to include religious as well as blood brothers. It also came under the leadership of a *shaykh*, a person who had the prestige to arbitrate because he represented the divine will rather than custom, and was governed by a new *Sunna* – the authoritative example of the Prophet – rather than tribal tradition.[266]

This relates to a notion we examined earlier in which an actor helps "fit" their argument within an existing normative arrangement. Scholars note that Muhammad spent his early days in Medina behaving as a *hakam*, a role of external judge-arbiter already known to the Arabs. [267]He reinforced this notion through his tolerance for the Jewish tribes and idolaters in the city: they were not required to convert, only to pledge political loyalty.[268] As time passed, Muhammad's behaviour in Medina resembled more that of a tribal chief.[269] This was vital to the Muslim enterprise because it created familiar sets of expectations for potential and new believers.

When Muhammad and the *umma* could be viewed in tribal terms, cultural codes and

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264 In one instance, a potential scandal involving one of Muhammad's wives continued to worsen until a revelation settled the truth of the matter. Lings, *Muhammad,* 243-6. The fact the believers accepted Muhammad's revelation as valid and not a self-serving judgment that helped extricate his family from scandal demonstrates the depth to which believers came to internalize the nature of this hybrid leadership.

265 See for instance the episode at Badr. Muhammad wanted to establish his forces in one location, but relented after admitting his decisions were based on personal views, not Divine guidance. Lings, *Muhammad,* 143.

266 Lapidus, *A History...* 29.

267 Ira Lapidus writes, "...feuding clans often selected someone reputed to have religious vision and to be just, politic, tactful, and disinterested to be their arbitrator, or *hakam*." Lapidus, *A History...* 22.

268 Sergeant, "The Sunnah…" 1-2

269 So how did Muhammad convey this sense of being a "tribal" leader? He held consultative assemblies at his home every Friday, an egalitarian move key to traditional tribal life; war booty went to him for distribution amongst the victorious combatants with a fifth held back for his use in caring for the poor (tribal chiefs commonly withheld a quarter); and he made wide use of *Hilm* to forge alliances with actors who might help the Muslims harass Meccan caravans.

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symbols were recognizable to the average Arab of the Hijaz and enrollment in Islam could seem less radical and dangerous. More importantly perhaps, the Muslims themselves could cognitively transpose the set forms of tribal life into the new arrangements under Islam. From his new base in Medina, Muhammad could now begin the 'strategic social construction' of several key social institutions in the Hijaz.

The transformation of the social institution of <u>kinship</u>

We've previously noted how Arabs in the Hijaz used the tracing of lineage to assign tribal identity. The identification of kinship is a constitutive norm in the legitimation of tribal polities insofar as identification with a particular kin group stipulated rights and responsibilities regarding community defence, mutual assistance, and so on. This process was always highly politicized, as Rodinson writes: "[I]deologists and politicians of the desert worked out genealogies in which the ties of kinship attributed to these ancestors reflected the various relations between the groups which bore their names."[270] In other words, tribal identity was constructed by self-conscious actors, the establishment of kinship ties being a norm-guided behaviour *performed* by individuals.

Returning now to the case study, Muhammad's move to Medina unleashed a wave of shock among the Meccans. They were reportedly incredulous at "the total disregard of blood ties and kinship which Muslims displayed."[271] The Meccans were further astonished to see Medina's tribes subsumed into the new 'super-tribe' of Islam. Meccan poets asked how the tribes of Medina had surrendered themselves to an outsider. The poet Abu Afak, for instance, was confounded by the meekness of those who had spent decades violently defending the sanctity of tribal kinship and protection:

The mountains will crumble before they submit.

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270 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 13.
271 Balyuzi, *Muhammad,* 45-6.

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Yet here is a rider come among them who has divided them.
[He says] 'This is permitted; this is forbidden' to all
kinds of things.
But if you had believed in power
And in might, why did you not follow a *tubba*? [a south Arabian ruler][272]

The poetess Asma bint Marwan expressed similar bewilderment (more crudely):

Fucked men of Malik and Nabit
And of 'Awf, fucked men of Khazraj [tribes and clans of Medina]
You obey a stranger who does not belong among you...

Do you, when your own chiefs have been murdered, put your hope in him
Like men greedy for meal soup when it is cooking?[273]

These poets were likely hoping to cut at the pride of the Medinese believers, many of whom would retain sentimental attachments (and material ties) to their former tribal identities. Muhammad met this challenge by introducing an alternative lineage structure for the Muslims. In a series of revelations, Muhammad established *spiritual* kinship lines which described the descent of the Muslims from Abraham through his son Ishmael, a supposed brother to Isaac. Ishmael became the father of all Arabs (alongside Isaac, the "father of the Jews") set in a schema alongside the greater and lesser prophets of the Old and New Testaments. The Muslims now composed a single people with a unified collective identity drawn from a rich legacy of ancient prophets.[274]

On a purely strategic level, these new kinship ties would have encouraged wavering believers. Armstrong notes, "The stories of the prophets of the past also consoled them by pointing out that their faith was not a monstrous 'innovation'; even though they seemed to be turning their backs on their fathers, they had their own spiritual lineage that reached back to Adam, the first Prophet".[275] The practical effect was to envelop the new believers in the kind of tribal pride with which they were familiar. Now, the Muslim community was also "able to boast

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272 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 157
273 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 158.
274 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 185-6.
275 Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 131-2.

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of the excellence of its stock and the great merits of its forerunners."[276]

This sort of challenge-and-response is part of the measurable evidence showing norms undergoing change within a social institution, according to research by Wayne Sandholtz. Sandholtz, a constructivist scholar whose recent work examined the change in rules governing plunder in wartime, writes:

> [T]he empirical analysis should show that normative change occurred in the cyclical or dialectical process I proposed, in which actions trigger disputes about rules, actors argue, and the outcomes of those arguments modify those rules. Further evidence of the cyclical dynamic would consist of observable changes in the nature of argumentation.[277]

By these guidelines, we might ask, "Do the normative changes 'stick?'" That is to say, can we show evidence of behavioural change that indicates acceptance by the Muslims of the modified normative rules, and therefore (in this case) signs that the Muslims accepted the norms governing their kinship identification?

In fact, the new norms were frequently tested in subsequent years. Adherence grew stronger as time passed – a suggestion of a 'learning' process in which benefits accrue and the norm becomes more deeply internalized. The first crisis came shortly after the move to Medina. A young Medinese Muslim (supposedly a Meccan provocateur) began performing songs sung during the civil war between the Aws and Khazraj tribes. Others were caught up in the reverie: Muslim men of Aws singing of bloody victories over the Khazraj, and Muslim Khazraj men singing about heroic acts of vengeance. The atmosphere grew heated and only the intercession of Muhammad prevented the resumption of pre-Islamic feuding.[278]

In a similar incident shortly afterward, a fistfight between two Muslims - one Meccan and one Medinan - led groups of men from each side to turn on one another. A Muslim from among the Medinese reportedly said to his cohorts, "See what you have done to yourselves. You have

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276 Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 72.
277 Wayne Sandholtz, "Dynamics of International Norm Change: Rules Against Wartime Plunder," *European Journal of International Relations* 14, no. 1 (March 2008): 111.
278 Lings, *Muhammad*, 129.

laid open your lands to them [the Meccan Muslims], you have shared with them all you possess. If you had kept your own for yourselves, then, by Allah, they would have gone somewhere else." He threatened to rally the Medinese to drive the Meccan believers from the city. While Muhammad's intervention once again ended the crisis, it seems identities and loyalties were still in flux.[279]

Nonetheless, the confrontations did not result in a full regression to tribal loyalties. And a subsequent event signals the deep shifts in identity underway in Medina. The son of the Muslim man from Medina who had tried to rally the Medinese against the Meccan Muslims approached Muhammad with an offer. He volunteered to murder his father as means to restore unity to the community. Muhammad declined, but the offer suggests the growing break with ties of blood kinship.[280]

The new Islamic identity grew markedly stronger in the following months. We know this because of the impact the normative changes had upon outcomes in struggles between Medina and Mecca. The Meccans seemed unable to grasp the depth of the ideational changes causing Muslims to reject tribal blood-bonds and this became a source of strategic strength for the Muslim forces. For example: Muhammad wanted to assassinate a poet named Ka'b whose verses were emboldening Meccan forces through savage mockery of the *umma*.[281] The volunteer was Ka'b's foster-brother, a believer once bound to Ka'b by tribal traditions of kinship. This Muslim foster-brother lured Ka'b into a trap by promising to guide him to a supposedly-secret gathering of Muslims disillusioned with Muhammad's leadership. Ka'b, likely deceived through his faith in the familial connection to the brother, left the safety of his home and was murdered.[282]

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279 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 197-8
280 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 198.
281 Ka'b encouraged the Meccans to avenge their defeat at Badr: "For such battles as Badr, tears and rain flow in torrents/The flower of the people perished round its cisterns/Stay close, O victims! The princes are slain!/So many of noble fame have been cut down/Men of goodly bearing, a present help for those in want." Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 174
282 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 176.

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Afterward, Meccan poets expressed outrage at the killing.[283] The reply in the *Quran* played on the disunity and confusion among the Meccans: "They [the Meccans] are very valiant among themselves: you would think them united. But their hearts are divided. They are men of no judgment."[284] Muhammad was fully exploiting his opponents' inability to distinguish friend from foe.

A similar fate befell a Meccan propagandist named Asma. Muhammad once again requested a volunteer assassin, and once again, the Muslim who stepped forward was a clanmate to the victim. He successfully slipped into Mecca and murdered Asma. The next day, as the victim's bewildered clan members met to discuss the crime, the Muslim assassin boldly appeared and boasted about the killing.[285] The group were so astonished "by the power of Islam" that the entire clan converted. The ending seems contrived but the heart of the story is probably true. The Meccans were cognitively disoriented by the changes in loyalties among their former kinsmen.

Shifting identities and changes in loyalties also sowed confusion in pitched battles. For instance, as Meccan forces approached Badr to confront the Muslims, an elder from a Meccan clan, misunderstanding the upcoming battle as simply another tribal war that would cease once Muhammad was dead or defeated, warned his troops to exercise restraint. The elder feared the long-term impact of blood feuds.[286] Rodinson notes the impact of this sentiment on the Meccan forces: "Many shrank from killing men who were related to them and giving rise to a new round of vendettas."[287] The subsequent Meccan defeat is partly the result of residual norms constraining the behaviour of their troops.

Shifting Identities Mean Shifting Interests: The Muslim Victory at The battle of Badr

283 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 194 "Since you boast/And for you it is a boast/Of having murdered Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf/Coming to kill him in the early dawn/Him who was incapable of treachery or bad faith..."
284 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 195.
285 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 171.
286 "Men of Quraysh," he said, "ye will gain naught by fighting Muhammad and his companions. If ye lay them low, each man of you will forever look with loathing on the face of another who hath slain his uncle or his cousin or some yet nearer kinsman."Lings, *Muhammad,* 144.
287 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 167.

For their part, the ideational shift away from tribal identities gave Muslim troops several advantages. Their disciplined sense of collective interests could be a powerful force in combat against disarrayed polytheist formations. This was notably demonstrated in the Muslims' success against Mecca at Badr.

The battle of Badr began as a raid and ended in the Muslims' most important battlefield victory. Muhammad and several hundred Muslims set out to attack a large Meccan caravan. The Meccans responded by rushing troops to defend their goods. As often happened, the caravan escaped. But the two sides, knowing the location and strength of the other, decided to battle at the hills of Badr. The result was a rout: The Meccans - who had not lost a battle for generations – now lost several prominent leaders. The outnumbered Muslims had few casualties and took plunder and prisoners from the defeated forces.[288] Some of the prisoners and several of their Meccan kin - who visited Medina under protection to negotiate for the release of their clansmen – subsequently became Muslims. Traditional accounts say they had been impressed by seeing the *umma* at work in Medina. But probably some had also seen the proverbial writing on the wall.

This was the effect of the demonstration of Islam's power at Badr. To the Medinese, Muhammad had shown himself a clever tactician and a wise leader. And to the rest of the Hijaz, the Muslims were suddenly a force to be reckoned with.[289]

What's most important to note here is how the changing sense of self-identity among the Muslims was altering their conceptions of their own interests. During the battle, Muslim forces fought coherently and obeyed commands from the Prophet and his chief lieutenants. The Meccan forces meanwhile lacked a unified command and saw their numbers reduced by disputes among clan leaders, each being essentially a warlord fighting for the benefit of his own clan. So,

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288 Lings, *Muhammad,* 149. Captives could be very profitable when they were ransomed back to their family members.
289 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 168.

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Meccan leader Abu Sufyan withdrew from Badr after learning his own caravan of goods had slipped safely past Muslim raiders.

This theme is repeated in histories of the period. Much later, near the end of the war with Mecca, 1,400 Muslim soldiers advanced on a coalition of enemy Jewish tribes garrisoned in a nearly impregnable oasis called Khaybar. The tribes had mustered a joint defense of 10,000 troops. In a nighttime maneuver performed in near-silence, Muslim infiltrators separated the defending tribes from one another. In panic, each tribe retreated to its own stronghold and abandoned the joint defences. Muslims forces then defeated each tribe individually.[290] Lings writes of the vanquished in this battle:

> It was their misfortune to be now suddenly faced by an army which, though small, was penetrated with the discipline implied in the revealed verse: *Verily God loveth those who fight for His cause in ranks as if they were a close-built block,*[Passage from the Quran] an army of men whose souls delighted in the promise of the words: *How many a little band hath overcome a multitude by God's leave!*[291]

If we recall the earlier discussion about the key elements of tribal identity, we will remember the prized place that defence of the clan or tribe held for the Arabs of the Hijaz. To be considered a great warrior for one's people was to achieve a highly desirable status. This deep sense of vanity, a desire to increase one's self-esteem perhaps, was not missing among the Muslims.[292] Instead, as Ira Lapidus explains, it was transferred to the new community which had transcended their previous identities:

> The traditional Arab virtues were vested with new Islamic meaning: bedouin courage in battle, reckless bravery in defense of one's tribe, became persistent dedication to the new faith of Islam and the capacity for disciplined sacrifice in the name of the new

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290 Muhammad's victory at Khaybar demonstrated his keen understanding of the limited "interests" of his opponents. As we saw earlier, hilm suggests a *Realpolitik* diplomacy for winning over opponents. Muhammad had mastered its art. Once the Jewish tribes at Khaybar had retreated to the array of fortresses sprinkled through the oasis, Muhammad's troops faced a long siege to crack each fort. A diplomatic breakthrough occurred when defenders in one fort negotiated a surrender in return for their lives and property being spared. These reasonable terms sapped the spirit of other tribes and they soon surrendered on the same conditions (Lings, *Muhammad,* 266-9). Delegations from neighboring oases, having "learned their lesson from Khaybar", then put up only token resistance before also accepting similar agreements. Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 252-4.

291 Lings, *Muhammad,* 265. Italics in original.

292 Finnemore and Sikkink identify legitimacy, reputation, and esteem as motives for actors exercising newly adopted normative arrangements. "International Norm Dynamics..." 898, 902.

community."[293]

The transformation of the institution of <u>raiding</u>

Muhammad faced considerable threats during his early years in Medina. The city's Jewish tribes feared for their power in the united community — previously, they had used alliances to balance against the divided Arab tribes. Moreover, Mecca remained the region's hegemonic actor with enormous economic and political resources to use against the *umma*. And now the Prophet had to contend with the challenges of his own success: those who were joining joining Islam for purely material interests -called "hypocrites" or "doubters" in the *Quran*- could become a fifth column among the body of believers if they felt their (material) needs were not being met.[294]

As Muhammad considered his options, a revelation offered him a path. The *Quran* records the voice of God: •Permission to fight is given unto those who fight because they have been wronged; and God is Able to give them victory. Those who have been driven from their homes unjustly, for no cause other than for their saying: Our Lord is God.••[295] In response, Muhammad in 623 began raiding Mecca's trade caravans. Raiding, or the *razzia*, was a time-honoured institution in the Hijaz. The practice was subject to strict rules as to the months on which raids could be conducted, the importance of avoiding bloodshed, and so on. Its intent, as a tribe-against-tribe activity, was primarily to acquire material goods. The first raids were staged against caravans plying the Yemen-Syria routes, as well as those resupplying Meccan markets from agricultural centres like Ta'if. But these early forays were mostly a failure. Muhammad's forces had little success in even locating the caravans.

Then, a group of believers acting as lookouts, stumbled across a small caravan near Ta'if.

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293 Lapidus, *A History...* 29.
294 Lings, *Muhammad,* 126-7.
295 Lings, *Muhammad,* 135. Passage from the *Quran.*

It was the month of Rajab, one of the four sacred months of pagan tradition when fighting was forbidden. As Lings writes, the men were uncertain what to do. "'Were these pre-Islamic conventions still binding, they asked themselves."[296] They decided to attack and in doing so, killed one man and took several others prisoner. When the raiders returned to Medina they found the community horrified at this breach of the sacred months. Meccan poets assailed the Muslims for attacking at this holy time. Even Muhammad was angry until a new revelation cleared up the controversy: Mecca's sacrilege and cruelty excused the raid. The prisoners could be ransomed and the booty retained for use by the community.

The impact of the raid was economically small. Much more important was the disruption of the institution of "raiding" — an institution whose norms, not coincidentally, benefited the hegemon's trading needs. As Karen Armstrong writes, "these holy months were part of a pagan system that he [Muhammad] was trying to overcome."[297] Now the sacred months were not necessarily sacred and violence was acceptable if caravans resisted. Moreover, as Watt notes, the normative foundation of raiding was reconfigured from a materialist task to a religious duty. The raid had now become "an activity of believers and against unbelievers."[298] The change in context gave believers a material reward for fulfilling their duties to God, a cognitively potent formula for promoting belief. Moreover, the Muslims carried out this religious activity collectively, as allies, further cementing the bonds of unity and lending strength to the legitimacy of the *umma*.

We can also see how Muhammad used his careful understanding of his people's needs — his use of *Hilm* — to bring about a reconfiguration of their interests. Several scholars who've studied The Constitution of Medina have described how Muhammad helped legitimize the *umma*

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296 Lings, *Muhammad,* 136.
297 Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 171. The use of violence was also significant, in a much broader sense than the early Muslims probably appreciated. She writes, "Instead of being a pacifist religion that turns the other cheek, therefore, Islam fights tyranny and injustice. A Muslim may feel that he has a sacred duty to champion the weak and the oppressed. Today when Muslims call for a jihad against their enemies, they are usually responding to this Quranic ideal." 172.
298 Watt, *Muhammad,* 108.

and transcend tribal loyalties through new mechanisms of wealth distribution. The Prophet took an "integrative" approach in that conflicting forces were made allies in obtaining goods for equitable distribution. Yildirm describes this model as "the integration of desires" where power (among individuals or subgroups) is no longer required for wants and material interests to be satisfied. Instead, satisfaction is dependent on collaborative effort.[299]

This approach is a much broader sort of appeal to men's interests, offering membership on a 'winning team' that grants protection from attack and opportunities for enrichment. I would argue that the successes which lead one side or another to appear "victorious" (and therefore capable and competent) also lend credence to the victor's philosophical foundations. In other words, the cognitive path to a norm's legitimation is often paved with material success.

By way of example, Muhammad sometimes used funds from his growing treasury — the fifth of the war booty ceded to him as leader — for gifts to those whom the Quran refers to as "those whose hearts are won." The meaning of this passage is not entirely clear, as Rodinson notes. Many Muslim scholars believe it to mean "those whose hearts are *to be* won."[300]Others view it as meaning gifts to tribal delegations who had *already or recently* converted, while still others see the verse as suggesting purchasing the loyalty of tribes who were wavering or had not yet committed. In any case, the idea is the same: increasing the attractiveness of one's ideas using the talisman of wealth.

In any case, the impact on behaviour grew more evident as the raids became more profitable. At first, Muhammad had required only Meccan Muslims to participate. Soon, Medinese Muslims were also eager to take part.[301] The new community was rapidly internalizing the new norms governing the *razzia*, the path to acceptance made easier as benefits accrued.

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299 "Integrative power emerges when the rights and needs of the conflicting parties are considered as more important than power." Yildirim, "Peace and Conflict…" 114.
300 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 226. Italics added.
301 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 162-4.

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The transformation of the institution of <u>alliances</u>

In the same way that Muhammad preserved the *form* of 'the raid' but overturned *the normative context*, he also transformed the nature of the 'tribal alliance.' We can look at this from several perspectives. In the first place, alliances were a central feature of tribal life in the Hijaz. Before the advent of Muhammad, there could be no question of asking, "an alliance with whom?" for alliances were intimately tied to the right of tribal/clan leaders to award protection, recognize confederates, and so on.

It wasn't long after Muhammad's shift to Medina that bedouin tribes began to make alliances with the *umma*. At first, bedouin partners acted mostly as spies. After the Muslim victory at Badr however, the alliances became more comprehensive, including cooperation in severing Mecca's trade routes to the North.[302] What's remarkable here is that the bedouin accepted to ally with an entirely new kind of systemic actor. By doing so, they granted legitimacy to the *umma*'s implicit claim to being a fully-fledged member of the system. It's precisely this external recognition of an actor that helps cement the legitimation process that began domestically and ends in the international arena.

Muhammad's remaking of this institution had another angle. He consciously undermined the web of traditional alliances criss-crossing the Hijaz by absolving new Muslims of any alliance agreement contracted outside the *umma*.[303] In a similar way that the dissolution of kinship bonds among the Muslims had caught their Meccan kin off-guard, other tribes were now astonished to find erstwhile allies abandoning them to their fate. One obvious test to assess the internalization of a norm is to see whether a group will stake its existence on the new arrangements. Time and again Muhammad's forces undertook considerable risks based upon the strength of their new beliefs. Their opponents meanwhile frequently met disaster by failing to appreciate the changes.

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302 Lapidus, *A History...* 27. At this point, the bedouin allies remained polytheists. These were merely strategic alliances.
303 Sergeant, "The Sunnah…" 20.

That pattern was repeated again as the institution of alliances began to transform.

For example, one of Medina's Jewish tribes was implicated in a plot to assassinate Muhammad. The guilty parties retreated to their fortress and called for help from former alliance partners among Medina's Arab tribes. Instead of rushing to assist, a delegation from one of these formerly allied tribes — now all Muslims - delivered a devastating message: the punishment for violating the constitutional agreement would be permanent exile from Medina. Jewish tribal leaders expressed shock at the perceived betrayal but the messengers replied, "'Hearts have changed and Islam has wiped out old alliances."'[304] Armstrong writes, "[T]hey [the Jewish tribe] had not realized that the old system had gone forever, and still believed that their former Arab confederates were just waiting for the chance to restore it."[305]

Later, men of the last Jewish tribe remaining in Medina attempted a fifth-column action. They were defeated and condemned to death on the judgment of a former tribal leader who had been among their closest allies. The result was a deep impression on the Arab tribes of the Hijaz. The imposition of a death sentence was a sign of strength, "since it showed that the Muslims were not afraid of blood reprisals."[306] And Muhammad was clearly demonstrating that past, pre-Islamic agreements were invalid.

Within a few years, Muhammad had successfully transformed attitudes about alliances. Tribes clamoured to ally with the Muslims. Muhammad had demonstrated that the Muslims of the *umma* were excellent alliance partners. And there was a moral dimension also. Lings writes:

> [T]he Prophet was now known as a dangerous and incalculable enemy and as a powerful, reliable and generous ally; by comparison, other alliances were beginning to seem less attractive and more hazardous....but there was also a factor, slow-working yet powerful and profound... This was the remarkable serenity which characterized those who practiced the new religion. The Koran... imbued the believers with the certainty that they had within easy reach, that is through the fulfillment of certain conditions well within their capacity,

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304 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 192.
305 Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 185. Another, similar incident is recounted by Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 193.
306 Watt, "Muhammad", 49.

the eternal satisfaction of every possible desire.[307]

Montgomery Watt describes the shift in slightly less flowery terms, although the idea is similar. The new alliance system "fit" with the changing nature of Arabia. The *umma* represented egalitarianism, a forward (and outward) looking perspective: "[Muhammad] was being carried forward in the stream of emergent social forces. The Meccans, on the other hand, were attempting to retain a position of privilege that was no longer appropriate in the new circumstances."[308] Therefore, as much as the Muslims had succeeded in asserting their alliance model, the Meccans had failed with theirs: an institution based upon what historians describe as a ruthless, contingent tribalist policy "...had proved ineffective before the moral and political power of Islam."[309]

Legitimacy and power

The transformation in the norms of the institution of alliances is inextricably linked with the eventual victory of Islam in the Hijaz. Clearly, the actor which assembles the largest body of allies has a material advantage in warfare. But I would suggest that more important is the legitimacy which the tribal alliances conferred upon the *umma*. It is this deepening recognition of the legitimacy of the Islamic community which "cascaded," to use Finnemore and Sikkink's terminology, through the Hijaz and permitted events to spiral into the bloodless victory which was soon to come.

To back up a moment, we can say that Muhammad's military victories are undoubtedly an assertion of "power", if we understand this to mean his ability to control outcomes. And yet, what constitutes this "power" in a meaningful sense? Bukovansky argues that legitimacy is itself a constitutive component of ("state") power.[310] This seems axiomatic and yet it's often dropped as

307 Lings, *Muhammad,* 290
308 Watt, *Muhammad*, 142.
309 Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 211.
310 On an actor level, she writes, "without domestic legitimacy governments will have difficulty mustering the resources to act as

'reductionist' in the systemic analysis of capabilities. In those terms, as the legitimacy of Muhammad's stewardship of the *umma* increased, the corresponding legitimacy of Meccan modes of authority began to decline. This was not coincidental: the two forms of authority were opposed to one another. Islam was viewed by the Meccans as a real, material threat to their economic and political interests.[311] Of course the real threat was not so much political or economic but to the *cultural* hegemony of ideas concerning legitimate authority in the system. Muhammad was constructing and demonstrating an efficacious alternative to tribalism. Bukovansky writes, "Culture shapes the international system because beliefs about legitimacy are forged through cultural discourse, and without legitimacy power cannot endure."[312]

The resulting shift in capabilities during the following years was less material than *ideational* (the tribal allies were often fickle and unreliable). Finnemore and Sikkink use a parallel between realist and constructivist thinking to explain the idea:

> From a constructivist perspective, international structure is determined by the international distribution of ideas. Shared ideas, expectations, and beliefs about appropriate behaviour are what give the world structure, order and stability. ... In an ideational international structure, idea shifts and norm shifts are the main vehicles for system transformation. Norm shifts are to the ideational theorist what changes in the balance of power are to the realist.[313]

As we've seen, Muhammad carefully constructed the social ties binding this new form of legitimacy through a mixture of ideational appeal and the satisfaction of material interest. The *umma* became a model of an alternative form of governance — bonded by belief rather than kinship. At the same time, Muhammad worked to create conditions in which emulation and attraction could draw away supporters from the Meccans and their allies.

Those actors who allied in whatever way with the *umma* were implicitly recognizing that the system was now bifurcated into competing cultures. Muhammad had worked to create this

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a state on the international scene." Bukovansky, "The Altered State," 212.
311 Watt, "*Muhammad,*" 46.
312 Bukovansky, "The Altered State," 211.
313 Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics," 894.

cognitive break "domestically" by using kin against one another in the manner of the assassinations of Ka'b and Asma. In a larger way, this was done through the warfare at Badr in which kin fought kin to the death. Balyuzi says these activities fuelled a rage among the Meccans such that most in the Hijaz could see there would "never be unbroken peace between these contestants." [314] Now the alliances with external actors expanded the impact throughout the system.

IR research has shown that this sort of strategic creation of a cultural divide is a vital part of asserting a new normative arrangement into a system. Bukovansky suggests establishing the ideational parameters of a conflict helps set terms for the nature of the struggle. That is, what the "stakes" are in battles ahead and therefore how the contest should be viewed by actors on the sidelines of the system.[315] Just as important, this establishes a clear measure for success and failure and therefore the worthiness of an actor for emulation. The result is a proverbial 'line in the sand' - groupings can thereby "line up" along the fissure created by the central question of legitimacy.[316]

After victory, defeat

The Meccans sought to restore their status following their defeat at Badr. They firmed up relations with tribes controlling alternative routes for the caravans[317] and then marched on Medina with an army of 3,000 (including tribal allies and a force from Ta'if). They soundly defeated an outnumbered Muslim force at the battle of Uhud in 625 AD. Muhammad was injured badly enough that rumors swirled he'd been killed.[318]

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314 Balyuzi, *Muhammad,* 72.
315 Bukovansky, *Legitimacy and Power Politics,* 11.
316 Bukovansky, "The Altered State," 227.
317 Lings, *Muhammad,* 170-1
318 There was a moral victory for the Muslims: A vengeful group among the Meccans mutilated the fallen Muslim soldiers. This horrified the bedouin and seriously damaged the Meccan's reputation. Lings, *Muhammad,* 189.

In the following months, Muhammad was deceived twice by tribes who feigned interest in converting to Islam. In both instances, desert tribes ambushed teachers sent by the Prophet to provide lessons in the new religion. Muhammad's response was to hearten the believers with a renewed promise from Allah that the system of Islam would ultimately prevail over the existing order of the Hijaz, a pledge supported by the history of past hegemons who had faded away with time.[319]

In 627, the Meccans attempted a decisive blow by marching on Medina with 10,000 troops. Muhammad was forewarned and dug an enormous trench around the city, preventing cavalry from overrunning his 3,000 defenders. The siege lasted two weeks with the Meccans unable to cross the barrier. Finally, a devastating storm destroyed tents and made fires impossible. As the weather broke, the Muslims discovered the disunited and frustrated Meccans had decamped for home.

Phase 4: The New Norms Reach Tipping Point In The Hijaz

Tribal Legitimacy Begins to Collapse

Although several years of struggle remained ahead before Muhammad successfully brought the Hijaz into Islam, the failed siege of Medina marked the beginning of the end of Meccan hegemony. Even as Meccan forces besieged the Muslims during the battle of The Trench, tribal modes of authority in the Hijaz had become fragile. How do we know this? Because the historical record shows tribes systematically fracturing from the inside.

The hegemonic tribe of the Hijaz, the Quraysh, were decimated by defections to Islam. Lings describes how entire neighbourhoods in Mecca were left abandoned by those leaving for Medina.[320] Later, a Meccan plan to attack the Muslims crumbled after segments of an allied tribe

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319 The Prophet gave this revelation: "Ways of life have passed away before you. Travel in the land and see what was the end of those who belied God's messengers. ... Falter not, nor grieve, for ye shall overcome them if ye are true believers." Lings, *Muhammad,*197-8.

320 Lings, *Muhammad,* 116.

sympathetic to Islam betrayed their own tribesmen and warned Muhammad. These pagan tribesmen explicitly chose to reject the fundamental bonds of the desert. The Prophet then struck preemptively, seizing hundreds of captives.[321] And in another instance, a bedouin clan leader's plot to murder Muslim teachers (mentioned earlier) nearly fell apart after his own people rejected the plan. The plan was saved only after another tribe agreed to do the killings.[322]

This tribal implosion was hastened by a truce agreement signed in 628 AD.[323] Meccan negotiators offered to suspend warfare for ten years if the Prophet would turn away all new converts fleeing to Medina and would postpone a planned pilgrimage to the Ka'ba for one year. Muhammad agreed, even when the Meccans insisted he strike out his title 'Prophet of God' from the signed agreement.

The Muslims used the truce period to achieve a decisive victory. Their weapons now were not swords and bows, but discussion and argument, as they reconnected with old friends and family among the Meccans. Many Meccans came to see that Islam intended to largely maintain 'business as usual' in their city. After all, Muhammad made the Ka'ba the point toward which all Muslims directed their prayers, signaling that Mecca would remain an important site of pilgrimage. Soon a new surge of enrolments joined Islam, including many Meccan notables.[324] The earliest biographer of Muhammad, Ibn Ishaq, attributes Islam's victory to precisely this period of openness between the two enemies — attributing the ultimate success of Islam in the Arabian peninsula to rhetoric and persuasion, not force of arms:

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321 Lings, *Muhammad,* 237.
322 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 190-1 Although the details vary there is evidence that the tribe refused their clan leader's demand because the supreme tribal leader had already awarded protection over the Muslims. If so, then the fracturing of the tribal norms comes in the behaviour of this individual leader who violated the tribe's sacred code of protection, rather than the tribesmen who disobeyed his orders. See for instance Lings, *Muhammad,* 202.
323 In 628 AD, Muhammad and 1,600 followers, carrying only "travellers' weapons" of swords in scabbards, set out to for a pilgrimage in Mecca. The move was audacious but Muhammad knew Meccan commercial interests depended on hosting a variety of pilgrims to the Ka'ba. Turning away a peaceful Muslim group could prove a disastrous betrayal of this responsibility — some bedouin allies of the Meccans warned that keeping Muslims from the Ka'ba would end their alliance. Lings, *Muhammad,* 250.
324 "A ten-year truce meant that the Muslim and the idolater could now meet in peace. This unrestrained association caused men to develop the highest regard for Muhammad, and greatly weakened the position of the Quraysh [Meccan rulers]."Balyuzi, *Muhammad,* 112.

'No previous victory in Islam was greater than this. There was nothing but battle when men met; but when there was an armistice and war was abolished and men met in safety and consulted together none talked about Islam intelligently without entering it. In these two years, [628-630] double as many or more than double as many entered Islam as ever before.'[325]

The *Quran* records a revelation as saying: "It may be that God will establish love between you and those with whom ye are at enmity."[326] This bonding represents the penultimate step in the "norm life cycle" described by Finnemore and Sikkink. A *tipping point* is reached when a "critical mass" of influential actors adopts the new norm.[327]   The *umma* had warded off early annihilation and instead become a model of legitimate authority worthy of emulation - a successful model being an important part of carrying a new normative system over the "threshold" of marginality and into widespread acceptance.[328]

And so, by 630 AD, when a tribal quarrel gave Muhammad an opportunity to abandon the truce, he discovered the Meccans had lost all interest in continuing the fight.[329] His offer to spare the lives and property of anyone remaining inside their homes was sufficient to bring about the Meccan surrender and to permit his 10,000 troops to enter the city nearly unopposed.[330]

Phase 5: New Norms Cascade Through The System

None of the conquered Arabs – including the Meccans - were forced to convert to Islam. Nonetheless, they enrolled in large numbers: "Social pressures no longer worked in favour of paganism but favoured Islam instead. It was enough; in a few years, paganism in Mecca was a thing of the past."[331] The same principle operated throughout the Hijaz. The immediate post-Mecca period became known as the "year of delegations" as representatives of distant tribes

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325 Ibn Ishaq as quoted in Armstrong, *Muhammad*, 22.
326 Lings, *Muhammad,* 259.
327 Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics", 901.
328 Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics," 906.
329 "They were essentially merchants. Good at taking caravans to Syria and Yemen. The truce had given them a breathing space and the chance to carry on their trade". Balyuzi, *Muhammad,* 127.
330 Muhammad's only demand was that all idols in Mecca be destroyed, including those in the Ka'ba. He permitted only a shrine to Allah and a small shrine to Mary and Jesus.
331 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 262.

converted *en masse*.

Muhammad's mission in the Hijaz was almost complete. The nearby city of Ta'if was nearly impregnable and Muhammad abandoned a siege after two weeks. Shortly afterward, the tribal rulers of Ta'if attempted to exchange their surrender in return for permission to keep their idols. Muhammad refused and ultimately Ta'if's inhabitants agreed to destroy their shrines.

Finnemore and Sikkink describe how norms "cascade" through the system so that even without significant pressure, a new normative arrangement is adopted by actors. These authors suggest the mechanism is similar to Waltz's concept of socialization: through material sanctions or incentives, and under the criticism or encouragement of other actors in the system who have adopted the new norms, actors are socialized to follow the norms of the new ideational structure:

> We argue that states comply with norms in [cascades] for reasons that relate to their identities as members of an international society. Recognition that state identity fundamentally shapes state behaviour, and that state identity is, in turn, shaped by the cultural-institutional context within which states act...[332]

At this point, how deeply internalized were the new norms of the *umma*? Was the tribal mode of authority entirely finished, or might it resurface once a suitable temptation presented itself? Certain incidents occurring after the fall of Mecca demonstrate the depth to which the new norms had been internalized in the actors. For instance, Muhammad would now sometimes present large gifts to new converts entering the faith (a number of whom were likely driven by strictly material interests). A longtime Muslim protested to the Prophet, "It is not with such gifts that one seeks God's face".[333] Perhaps he was jealous of the goods being distributed or perhaps he took genuine affront at this materialism. In any case, Muhammad's gifts — a risky maneuver that only years before might have split the Muslims over the division of spoils — proceeded peacefully.

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332 Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics," 902.
333 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 264.

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More significantly, Muslim actors maintained their faith despite facing material deprivation as a result. Among the bedouin, becoming Muslim meant giving up a vital tool of survival — namely, raiding other tribes (who were now fellow Muslims). They also surrendered an important component of the tribal sense of identity: the masculine notions of honour and courage associated with inter-tribal warfare. With Islam having created a Hijaz-wide polity, the institutions of violence which once governed between tribes were no longer permitted.[334] Despite this, the bedouin largely remained within Islam.[335]

The most challenging test came with Muhammad's death in 632 AD. Tensions arose between believers as some feared traditional enemies might now seize control of the community to "rule over them as dictators."[336] Yet the *umma* remained united (for the early years, in any case) with a gathering of Muslims choosing a caliph to rule in Muhammad's stead. This peaceful transition, according to Rodinson, is the ultimate proof of the depth of belief among the Muslims, and I might add, the measure of how completely the new ideational structure supporting the *umma* "fulfilled Arabia's deepest needs".[337] This "fit" of the new order can be seen in the poetry that arose after Muhammad's death. Traditional stylistic devices from pre-Islamic times were maintained. Now, however, the themes were often Islamic. This poem is a traditional *nasib* which recalls a lost love. In this case, Muhammad:

At Taybah there remain the Prophet's
relics and a luminous
encounter place while other relics
fade and waste away.[338]

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334 Muhammad had earlier handled them in a way meant to cement their nascent loyalty. Certain bedouin tribes whose conversion was superficial were excluded from plunder-rich campaigns against far-flung pagan tribes until they demonstrated a genuine degree of commitment to the new faith. Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 273.

335 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 268. Rodinson says the rapid expansion outside the Hijaz came from the Muslims' need to find new sources of plunder and not strictly for the purpose of spreading Islam. In fact, non-Muslims living in Muslim lands were required to pay a special tax not levied on believers. Therefore, large-scale conversions by conquered peoples deprived the umma of a significant revenue source. The Muslims had an economic reason for not encouraging mass conversions.

336 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 290.

337 Rodinson, *Muhammad*, 293.

338 Michael A. Sells, "Toward a Multidimensional Understanding of Islam: The Poetic Key" in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64, no. 1 (1996): 149.

3.4/CONCLUSION: HOW BEST TO EXPLAIN THE CHANGES IN THE HIJAZ?

The null hypothesis stated at the outset of this thesis is phrased as a deliberate challenge to the notion that ideas can prove transformative: "[T]he null hypothesis is that the actions described can best be understood on the basis of egoistic interests in the context of power realities: that variations of interests are not accounted for by variations in the character of the ideas that people have." In the case study we've examined, can the ideational transformation of the social structure of the Hijaz be understood simply by changes in power arrangements? John Hall seems to reject the question itself, writing, "'Pure materialists' who regard belief at best as an unimportant mask for interest hold to a highly implausible position insofar as they suggest that human history would have run the same course even had paganism, world religions, and Marxism never been invented."[339] I would argue that Islam as an idea is central to any reasonable accounting of the events we've described. Although the Hijaz was undergoing economic and social turmoil at the time of Muhammad's first revelation, the region was not *in transition*. There was no coherent movement from one social setup to another, merely broad dissatisfaction with the lack of efficiency in the political arrangements of the day. No viable alternative ideas had emerged which could channel a transformation of the Hijaz. The hegemony of the Meccan Quraysh might have extended centuries longer if the Prophet had not undertaken his normative revolution.

During the years spanning Muhammad's life, the "hegemonic form of legitimate authority" of the Hijaz (to use Bukovansky's phrase), also known as the "constitution of international society" (to use Philpott's term) — that is to say, the normative structure governing the system of the Hijaz – shifted from one based on tribal arrangements to one based upon the *umma* or 'community of believers'. How did this happen? On one level, we can accurately observe that Mecca and Medina went to war and the hegemon was defeated. As a result, a new

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339 John A. Hall, "Ideas and the Social Sciences," in *Ideas and Foreign Policy,* 39

order was established. Watt describes this view by writing, "On the political level, then, the events...may be understood as the Meccan effort to meet the challenge from Muhammad to their very existence as a commercial state."[340] This view places Islam as a security challenge for powers in the Hijaz.[341] Muhammad, by this understanding, staged a militarized revolt and brought Islam through force of arms. Even were this correct, what would such an explanation really *explain* about the changes in the Hijaz? For instance, what shift in material capabilities allowed the divided and backward city of Medina to defeat the most sophisticated power in the Hijaz? How did actors in the Hijaz come to see that joining Islam would be in their interest? And what were those "interests" anyway? More precisely, how were these interests shaped and defined?

Neorealist theories are useful for describing the material setup of the system as (in the words of Koslowski and Kratochwil) "a shorthand for the organization of force."[342] Yet the explanatory/predictive content doesn't easily fit into detailed case studies, as Schroeder's work demonstrates and this case also suggests. Really, the problem with neorealist theory lies with its underspecification. For instance, although Mecca was the hegemon and should therefore have been the object of balancing behaviour by other actors, Mecca retained strong allies until the final phases of the conflict. On the other hand, Medina as a rising 'great power' had few substantial allies until later. A response could be made that Medina was perceived early on to be a future hegemon and therefore the allies of Mecca were in fact *balancing the Muslims;* however such prescience seems unlikely. This opens the door for an endless debate about how one determines objectively and subjectively who is a hegemon and how capabilities are measured. Meanwhile, constructivists view socialization as a key mechanism for system transformation — how else did

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340 Watt, "Muhammad," 46.
341 Mortimer contrasts Muhammad's life with that of Jesus Christ: "While claiming to be the national leader (Messiah) whom Jewish prophets had predicted, [Jesus] offered salvation only in the world to come, and to be achieved by individuals through faith, hope and charity, rather than by the nation through organized revolt."*Faith and Power,* 32.
342 Koslowski and Kratochwil,"Understanding Change," 216.

individual and corporate actors in the Hijaz come to internalize Muhammad's normative innovations (as critics note, neorealism seems to present "socialization" as a phrase meaning little more than systemic natural selection).[343] While neorealism's parsimony is meant to keep theory simple and to maintain a broad field of analysis, the criticism of Paul Schroeder seem particularly relevant as he writes, "Pursuing this point further on a theoretical level could lead to a sterile debate over just how broad and general outcomes have to be in order to be captured by neorealist theory."[344]

Of course neorealism has become something of a straw man. Yet even if every tenet of neorealist prediction were faithfully explicated, we still might wonder how much we've learned at the end of the day. This is a central theme of Schroeder's evident frustration with neorealism, as he notes: "A theory, to be valid, need not merely to predict a general outcome, but to explain its development and etiology, which neorealist theory here proposes to do and fails."[345]

A more classic variant of realism also leaves many questions unanswered. Muhammad's military victories were limited. Muslim forces lost almost as many battles as they won. Secondly, the material strength of Mecca was largely undiminished during most of the struggle with Islam. Explaining its failure to defeat the Muslims can't be understood on material bases alone. Nor can "power-seeking" fully describe the motivations of actors drawn to Islam. Indeed, the content of Muslim power remains largely undefined by traditional realist understanding and therefore clouds our ability to see how the *umma* could ever defeat forces consistently superior in material strength. We cannot explain Muslim victories without understanding the united vision and action

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343 See this criticism in Alastair Iain Johnston, "Treating International Institutions as Social Environments". *International Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (December 2001).

344 Schroeder, "Historical Reality," 130.   I believe that these criticisms remain valid even after adjusting Waltz's theory to accommodate Stephen Walt's notion that states balance threats, not power. Schroeder finds smaller actors explicitly chose specialization to survive and did not adopt the self-help standard of functional similarity. Many of the desert tribes seem setup by composition to be clients, as guides, guards and so on. Moreover, their responses to the ongoing struggle in the Hijaz varied widely. Some joined Islam, some signed agreements but remained pagan, others seem to have avoided conflict entirely and chose no side until the end.

345 Schroeder, "Historical Reality," 140.

that created the discipline distinguishing Muslim troops. The reverse is also true — namely, the disunity among tribal troops. Mecca's failure to defend itself during Muhammad's final approach likely cannot be seen in any other way except through this perspective.

Finally, how can we explain the nascent survival of Muhammad's nascent religion during its Meccan period? The individuals declaring their belief in Islam were clearly 'outgunned' by the surrounding community of idolaters. Yet they were left alive despite the deep threat they posed to the Meccan leadership. The Muslims were in fact protected by normative structures of kinship and alliance which held even against the strong benefits of contrary behaviour. In sum, force of arms certainly played a vital role in the rise of Islam, but it was not determinative. It was simply one tool, and not the most important one.

Among the rationalist theories, we might consider neoliberal arguments as being more persuasive. At different points, many groups seemed to have viewed conversion to Islam as in their 'interest'. The Muslim community could exploit any military success against the powerful Meccans as a sign that Islam was a worthy model of governance and belief. This was especially true after their initial victory over Mecca at the battle of Badr left tribal actors stunned by the defeat of a power previously believed indomitable. Patricia Crone writes this of the "year of delegations" after Mecca's defeat:

> What the mass conversions show is that Muhammad's God has something very attractive to offer here and now. ...[W]hen Muhammad established himself, they concluded that 'Allah is great.' The Arabs converted to Islam because Allah was a greater power than any other spirit endowed with a name and a cult so far known in Arabia.[346]

Crone is unintentionally describing the important neoliberal notion of 'soft power.' Although the term was still emerging when Crone wrote her book, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye have used this concept to explain how an attractive idea can itself become a form of power

Soft power...is the ability to get desired outcomes because others want what you want. It

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346 Crone, *Meccan Trade*, 241.

is the ability to achieve goals through attraction rather than coercion. It works by convincing others to follow or getting them to agree to norms and institutions that produce the desired behaviour. Soft power can rest on the appeal of one's ideas or culture or the ability to set the agenda through standards and institutions that shape the preferences of others.[347]

With that description, little wonder that neoliberal and constructivist theories are often described as being complementary, even similar. In fact, Jeffrey Checkel claims that in his research on the European Union, constructivist explanations are sometimes most suitable while at other times he finds more utility in rationalist theories.[348]

In our context, it's worth noting that Bukovansky specifically notes "legitimacy" as an important part of any calculation of an actor's power.[349] For their part, Finnemore and Sikkink note that the utility-maximizing actors of neoliberalism don't necessarily have to be power-seekers; instead "...rational choice can specify a utility function that includes religious, ideological, or altruistic concerns".[350] Muhammad, as we've seen, at several points used clear-eyed cost-benefit calculations in strategizing the extension of Allah's rule over the Hijaz.

And yet, neoliberal explanations still seem insufficient here. They tell us something more than strictly realist interpretations, but not enough. We want to know who the early Muslims were, how they viewed their world, and thereby why/how they wanted to change it. In more general terms we can ask, why do actor preferences change? *How* do actor preferences change? How do actors decide what they want in the first place? And on the other hand, why do actors continue to behave in particular ways, even when the hope of material benefits no longer apply (when circumstances are changing, have changed, or threaten to change)?

We can return for a moment to Robert Gilpin's theory of international relations. At one

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347Keohane, Robert, and Joseph S. Nye Jr. "Power and Interdependence in the Information Age." *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 1998): 86

348He writes, "This stress on synthesis helps promote an emergent trend, where there is a move away from an "either/or," "gladiator" style of analysis (either rational choice or constructivism) to a "both/and" perspective." Jeffrey T. Checkel, "Why Comply? Social Learning and European Identity Change," *International Organization* 55, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 579.

349 Bukovansky, *Legitimacy and Power Politics*, 9.

350 Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics..." 912.

point, Gilpin provides a nod to values and interests of actors by noting, from the viewpoint of diplomats and state leaders, "the basic task of peaceful change is not merely to secure peace; it is to foster change and achieve a peace that secures one's basic values."[351] Only one page later however, Gilpin restates his essential point that whatever human beings say or believe makes little fundamental difference to the content of historical outcomes: "Disequilibrium replaces equilibrium, and the world moves toward a new round of hegemonic conflict. It has always been thus and always will be..."[352] These two passages help clarify several important points about neoliberal ideas, points that may be obscured in the similarities between neoliberalism and constructivism. First, as we've discussed, the notion suggested by Gilpin that ideas are mere 'roadmaps' or 'rallying points' (to use Goldstein and Keohane's phrasing) of no substantive meaning to international affairs leaves much of the explanatory content of events in the academic dust. Ruggie unintentionally (I think) demonstrates the absurdity of this position by writing of the post-World War II global economic order, "We find it was less the fact of American *hegemony* that accounts for the explosion of multilateral arrangements than it was the fact of *American* hegemony."[353] What's left to say if we fail to examine the content and nature of American leadership? Or, in our case, the principles of Islam.

More importantly, the passages from Gilpin put into stark relief the distinct division between neoliberal and constructivist notions of the causative explanations for behaviour. Gilpin believes anarchy shapes behaviour and outcomes so that whatever temporary cooperation is possible between units, the system itself is doomed to a struggle for power.[354] To one extent or another, it's a view shared by rationalist theories. And yet, Gilpin makes a revealing statement that demonstrates my point. He warns (in reference to globalization) that "one should not

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351 Gilpin, *War and Change,* 209.
352 Gilpin, *War and Change,* 210.
353 John Gerard Ruggie, "Multilateralism," 568. Italics in original.
354 Gilpin, *War and Change,* 226.

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confuse the physical unity of the globe with moral unity".[355] Constructivists of course indeed believe that the world is malleable and even conflict requires a kind of normative 'unity' of understanding about the terms and nature of the violence. Therefore, while neoliberal theories posit an unchanging structure of anarchy such that individual agents are locked into one or another form of conflict, constructivist theories hold that the structure which channels behaviour is under constant reconfiguration, always constitutively forming and altering identities and desires.

Therefore, the constructivist argument, while not discounting the role of material power or of rational choice, is that before choices are made, before interests are established, an ideational context sets their parameters. And as that context changes, so can interests. So for instance, a strict study of power alone can't really say much about why actors behave in one way or another, as Martha Finnemore observes, "Ultimately, power and wealth are means, not ends. States must decide what to do with them."[356] Decisions as to how power should be applied come from the normative input of beliefs.

> The normative effects explored here go deeper. They involve reconfigurations of interests and actors in way that cannot be accommodated within the agent-oriented perspectives that dominate political science and economics. The norms explored here are 'constitutive' in the sense that they constitute, create, or revise the actors or interests which agent-oriented approaches take as given.[357]

Every international system has an ideational structure which helps define how the actors understand what they want, and how to get it: "The international system can change what states want. It is constitutive and generative, creating new interests and values for actors."[358] At the heart of any system is the structure of ideas, the key component of which is the foundational norm determining who has the right to be an actor.

355 Gilpin, *War and Change,* 225.
356 Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 2.
357 Finnemore, *National Interests,* 129.
358 Finnemore, *National Interests*, 5-6.

I believe this constructivist argument provides the fullest possible understanding of the change that occurred in the Hijaz during the lifetime of Muhammad. As we've seen, in his early period, Muhammad introduced a new norm into the system in which Arabs were warned to believe in the sovereignty of one God and to bring justice to the poor and weak regardless of tribe. This norm took on its mature form once the Prophet moved to Medina. There he composed the administrative structure necessary for establishing the *umma* - God as sovereign over a unitary super-tribe of believers – that could fight to establish these values. The "brute material interests" of Hijazi Arabs were no longer being met by tribal life, and as an alternative appeared that responded to their deeper needs (for security of life, for instance), beliefs changed and interests became realigned towards promotion of this new form of legitimacy. Subsequently, we can see that the widespread adoption of Islam led to a change in the political structure of the Hijaz, such that anarchy was abolished and replaced by hierarchy.

We've seen how some individuals and groups, by accepting to redefine themselves as Muslims, acted against their most basic material interests: namely, to keep breathing (in the individual's case) and to maintain control — power — over one's affairs and destiny (in the case of clans or groups: the Aws and Khazraj of Medina essentially signed themselves out of existence as corporate actors). Constructivists help explain this by what's known as a "logic of appropriateness." In this reckoning, once beliefs about identity and interests are deeply internalized they govern behaviour in a manner where actions are no longer the subject of "choice" in the rationalist sense. Instead, as James March and Johan Olsen describe, "Rules are followed because they are seen as natural, rightful, expected, and legitimate. Actors seek to fulfill the obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, as members in a political community or group and the ethos, practices and expectations of its institutions."[359]

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[359] James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, "The Logic of Appropriateness," *Arena Working Papers (*April 2009): 3.

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Clansmen, for instance, don't show loyalty to their clan simply because they repeatedly ask themselves if one or another action is to their benefit. Instead, they act according to how generations of clansmen have behaved before them, in rules and beliefs often inscribed in myth, symbols, and habit. This collection of primarily *normative* rules ("ought to…") and beliefs were perpetuated in the social institutions of the Hijaz, of which we've examined only a few. In bundles, ordered by the structural 'master norm' of the system (the tribal-based polity) they gave meaning to being an Arab tribesman.

Muhammad worked at overturning these institutions insofar as they sustained Meccan hegemony over the Hijaz. The Prophet created a new structural master norm, then reinvented social institutions with new symbols, myths, and habits. Perhaps because these fulfilled deep needs among individuals at the time, and because of the disorientation caused by Muslim success,[360] the new norms of these institutions were rapidly internalized among the Muslims. Individuals, groups and tribes shifted their interests from raiding and other tribal activities to struggling along the terms laid out by Muhammad, acting as members of newly unified and mostly indivisible community of believers. Their successes reinforced their belief in the correctness of their cause. Soon enough, the legitimacy of the existing international order collapsed as a demonstrated failure. The actors in the Hijaz fully redefined themselves as Muslims rather than tribal actors, accepting the authority of the Prophet, the sovereignty of God, and thereby legitimizing the new "hegemonic form of legitimate authority." Thus they hoped to gain paradise, establish a more just order on earth, and improve the lives of themselves and their families under a new form of governance sent down by Allah and revealed by his Prophet.

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360 Ibid. They describe how periods of cultural confusion can create a new search for meaning among actors, leading them to "rethink who and what they and others are, and may become; what communities they belong to, and want to belong to; and how power should be redistributed." 16.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION - ISLAM, IDEAS, AND BATTLING THE HEGEMON

4.0 OSAMA BIN LADEN AND THE LESSONS OF HISTORY

Osama bin Laden was once the terror of the American imagination. He ultimately died with surprisingly little fuss. Unfortunately, bin Laden's beliefs and ideas have proven considerably more durable.

We now know that bin Laden lived his final years like a recluse, severed from direct contact with his followers and with his once-mighty personal corps reduced to a few hold-outs. Despite ejection from Afghanistan, defeat in Iraq, eradication in Saudi Arabia, and being reduced to a shaky rump amidst the xenophobic Pashtuns of Afghanistan and Pakistan, bin Laden's public pronouncements continued to exhibit confidence that jihadist forces would achieve great victories. In 2007 bin Laden issued this video invitation for the American people to surrender:

> I invite you to embrace Islam...[T]his magnificent Book [the Quran] is the secret of our strength and winning of the war against you despite the fewness of our numbers… There is a message for you in the Mujahideen [the troops of al-Qaeda]: the entire world is in pursuit of them, yet their hearts, by the grace of Allah, are satisfied and tranquil.[361]

Unfortunately for bin Laden, any subtleties hidden in messages like this one were mostly lost on American commentators. The bold pronouncements from him and his lieutenants were usually mocked as empty bravado from desperate outlaws[362] while the substantive contents were dismissed as propaganda.[363] As Martha Finnemore notes generally, "IR scholars have tended to

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361 Usama bin Laden, "The Solution: A Video Speech from Usama bin Laden Addressing the American People on the occasion of the Sixth Anniversary of 9/11 – 9/2007." *SITE Intelligence Group*. Sept. 7, 2007. http://counterterrorismblog.org/site-resources/images/SITE-OBL-transcript.pdf. Bin Laden also shrewdly reminded his American viewers that taxes- *zakat* - in Islam are very low: just 2.5%.

362 See, for instance: "Starving, Bandaged Bin Laden Offers US One Last Chance to Surrender," in *The Onion*. December 12, 2001. http://www.theonion.com/content/node/27999.

363 Finnemore says her studies of national governments and international institutions reveal that value-statements expressed publicly by elites are rarely mere rhetoric. She notes that, if nothing else, elites attempt to rally domestic constituencies around discursive "signposts." Martha Finnemore,"Legitimacy, Hypocrisy, and the Social Structure of Unipolarity: Why Being a Unipole Isn't All It's Cracked Up to Be," *World Politics 61,* no. 1 (January 2009): 61. Likewise, in his calls to the American people, bin Laden is simultaneously rallying a range of Salafist actors around the globe by touching deeply revered symbolic landmarks of Islamic history. Rather than taking seriously the content of al-Qaeda messages, however, many analysts choose an instrumental approach, searching for 'hidden signals' to action in al-Qaeda's public statements, presumably of the "light-the-bomb-now" sort. See for instance, Maamoun Youssef, "Al-Jazeera TV airs bin Laden Tape Condemning United States" *Associated Press*. December 26, 2001.

treat speech either as 'cheap talk,' to be ignored, or as bargaining, to be folded into strategic interaction."[364] In al-Qaeda's case, most experts seemed to have an anti-terror focus which limited their attention to only the discursive surfaces of public statements, likely in a hunt for what Wendt might call the "'brute' material forces" of plots, tactics, and so on.[365]

In all this, what can we make of bin Laden's apparently heart-felt reference to the *Quran*? If his piety was mere rhetorical 'cheap talk', then why have many Muslim scholars who study jihadist groups warned that security expertise is not sufficient to defeat extremism, warning instead that "we need to turn our attention to the...literature of social scientists and Islamic Studies specialists"?[366] A detailed look at jihadist epistemology is beyond our scope. But as we return to our focus on the role of ideas in international change, let's take bin Laden at face value for a moment and ask how the narrative of the Quran might encourage the belief among jihadists in the likelihood of their eventual global triumph.

The Quran, as we've seen, is regarded by Muslims as "the literal word of God, the Creator's immutable guidance for an otherwise transient world."[367] One key to understanding its modern power lies in recognizing its historical context: the chapters (*suras*) were gradually revealed to the Prophet Muhammad during his 22 year-long campaign to establish an Islamic community in central Arabia. The chapters of the *Quran* thereby collectively form a handbook of proven strategies for reshaping a political and social environment — whether in ancient Arabia or the modern Middle East.

As we saw in our case study, the guidance given to Muhammad in the Quran can arguably be separated into categories of belief already existing in the international relations literature, namely "causal" beliefs (shaping action) and "constitutive" beliefs (shaping identity). Both sets

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364 Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "Taking Stock," 402.
365 Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory,* 94.
366 Madawi Al Rasheed, "The Quest to Understand Global Jihad: The Terrorism Industry and Its Discontents," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 45, no. 2 (March 2009): 337
367 Esposito, *Islam,* 36.

of beliefs have been reconfigured and adopted by leaders in the worldwide jihadist community into what Esposito suggests are "transhistorical" norms. Esposito writes, "[T]he book and the Prophet provide eternal principles and norms on which Muslim life, both individually and collectively, is to be patterned. The challenge for each generation of believers has been the continued formulation, appropriation, and implementation of Islam in history."[368] We can extrapolate this idea to see how jihadist leaders can misuse the *Quran* to turn ideas born in Islamic antiquity into timeless norms for guiding behaviour.[369] To bring this discussion full circle, let's look once again at an al-Qaeda discourse.

The Early History of Islam and the Roots of Causal Beliefs for Waging War Against a Hegemon

In 2006, bin Laden's American propagandist "Azzam The American" aired a production entitled "Invitation to Islam." Azzam invited US soldiers to "join the winning side":

> [We] have seen some high ranking Crusaders, among them the FBI chief, Mueller, expressing their anxiety at the tsunami of conversions to the truth of Islam that is sweeping across America, which constitutes a fearsome challenge to the identity, security and survival of the Crusader state and to the authority of these conmen and women.[370]

Azzam probably recognized as a matter of objective reality that America is not yet witnessing mass conversions to Islam. But I would suggest that when al-Qaeda representatives speak and act as they do — however grotesque their distortions of Islam - they reflect a genuinely held belief in the possibility of transforming the relationship with an enemy through the dual strategy of "preaching and combat."[371] This is because early Islamic history, as we've seen and as the Quran recounts, offer a set of beliefs concerning tactics for the successful execution of systemic

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368 Ibid
369 Bruce O. Riedel, *The Search for Al-Qaeda: It's Leadership, Ideology, and Future,* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 132.
370 Azzam the American, "Invitation to Islam," Sept. 2, 2006
http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2006/09/azzams_invitation_to.php Gadahn's English-language statement is also available in segments on YouTube.
371 "Preaching and Combat" was an al-Qaeda affiliate waging a campaign to establish an Islamic state in Algeria. In current Salafist ideology, the two functions of Preaching (suggesting a "principled" or "constitutive" set of ideas) and "Combat" (a "causal" idea) are inseparable. Today the group is known as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, or AQIM.

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war against a seemingly all-powerful hegemon. Bruce O. Riedel, formerly a long-time analyst at the CIA, writes of al-Qaeda's strategy of "bleeding wars" in which a hegemon is weakened sufficiently to surrender the field. The materially stronger power is not decisively defeated in a military sense, but is nonetheless exhausted into conceding. The historical example Riedel cites, reasonably enough, is the USSR's withdrawal from Afghanistan after years of unsuccessful attempts to defeat the Islamist resistance.

But Riedel fails to probe deeper and see the "bleeding war" strategy used in Afghanistan during the '80s has direct parallels to Muhammad's campaign against Mecca.[372] Mecca was not decisively defeated by Muhammad's forces. Instead, the Meccans were "bled" into submission. In this way, the battles being waged by modern *jihadi* actors in Afghanistan can be seen as emulating the behaviour of the Prophet. They're adopting a proven strategy: Undermine the legitimacy of the hegemonic power and thereby hearten and mobilize Islamist supporters around the world; where possible, turn enemies into allies through the transformative power of the Word of God; and create attraction/emulation through impressive displays of faith, courage, and material success on the battlefield by avoiding defeat. Ultimately, the aim is to overturn regional and global social institutions that shape identities and interaction, and thereby incrementally create a new world on the template of the *Quran*.[373]

4.1/JIHAD - CAUSAL AND CONSTITUTIVE BELIEFS

If the foregoing seems far-fetched, it may be due to our secular outlook and a resulting failure to recognize the ideational parameters of the conflict being waged through much of the Middle East. Because while Riedel no doubt correctly recognizes that the example of the Soviet

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[372] Abdullah Azzam-the spiritual father of the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan and a co-founder of al-Qaeda — used explicit references to the historical experiences of Muhammad to encourage Muslim men to fight the Russians. See: "Join The Caravan." http://www.religioscope.com/info/doc/jihad/azzam_caravan_3_part1.htm The scholar of Islam, Maxime Rodinson, says of bin Laden, "[H]is thought structure takes us back to Islam's beginning." Maxime Rodinson. *Muhammad*, p. 352.

[373] The *Quran* is *sui generis* as a source of guidance for Muslims. There are, however, several other sources which are considered to illuminate the Quran's teaching: the *Sunna* are the collected doings and utterances of Muhammad, while various legal schools provide interpretative guidance. Esposito, 80-3. The *Quran* is the supreme source, and serves in any case as an effective analytical shorthand.

withdrawal provides historical encouragement for jihadists, that victory was itself only a recent confirmation of the successful use of Quranic *norms* which guided early Muslims to victory over the Meccans. That is to say, the values of *jihad* — not just as 'holy war' but also a 'holy struggle' to establish justice in the pathway of God – form a living ideational social institution that unites Muslims across time and space. The content of today's struggle — that is, the normative meaning of *jihad*[374] — is the real battlefield on which al-Qaeda and (largely unknowingly) the West now struggle.

For a window into this struggle, have a look through the pages of *Dabiq*, the slickly-produced magazine of the so-called Islamic State (also known as ISIS or ISIL). The articles communicate a recurring theme: would-be jihadists who study the earliest heroes of the Prophet's generation will see military and moral victories are attainable under the stewardship of God and modern *jihad* is a winnable enterprise.[375] Similarly, the authors of the al-Qaeda magazine, *Inspire*, ask readers to consider the Divine assistance lent to the Prophet and his companions in their own battlefield struggles. One article focusing on the nature of *jihad* invites readers to take moral and strategic lessons from the Prophet's defence of Medina and goes on to encourage jihadists to recall the military victory at Badr, a turning point in the war between Muslims and the numerically superior polytheist forces of Mecca.[376]

Constitutive Beliefs, Religion, Islam and War

Before I conclude, I want to take a moment to draw on the story we've studied and examine how the possibly unique nature of religious belief influences the global encounter between Islamist actors and western governments. The notions I'm offering are only a

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374 See Fazlur Rahman's discussion of *jihad* in *Islam*, 37.

[375] For just one example, this saying of the Prophet is related in the magazine: "You will invade the Arabian Peninsula, and Allah will enable you to conquer it. You will then invade Persia, and Allah will enable you to conquer it. You will then invade Rome, and Allah will enable you to conquer it. Then you will fight the Dajjal, and Allah will enable you to conquer him." https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/islamic-state-e2809cdc481biq-magazine-2e280b3.pdf

[376] http://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/inspire-magazine-4.pdf

suggestions for future study on how politics are influenced by religion *as a unique ideational form.* Although I'm discussing Islam specifically, I would hope that my speculative concepts might hold across a range of religions.

Critics might wonder about my focus on the original teachings of Islam rather than the many Muslim thinkers and revolutionaries who followed. I admit my approach is somewhat simplistic but I believe it provides an accurate foundation for understanding. This is for several reasons. First, while I recognize that the theology and politics of Islam have evolved through history in a highly complex fashion, and have been configured and reconfigured through various reformist and reactionary interpretations (most especially in the relatively recent, painful encounters with western imperialism and modern secularism) yet the living reality of modern Muslims, as shown in public opinion research, finds the intersubjective bases of belief to be relatively simple and centred around the desire to live in piety and justice according to the tenets of the *Quran* and the *Sunna*.[377] Moreover, while bin Laden was likely influenced by such reformist thinkers such as Ridah, Qutb, Faraj, and others, he himself was not particularly learned.[378] Most importantly, *from the point of view of the actors themselves* (such as bin Laden), while fundamentalism is a practical organizing principle addressing current conditions in the modern political and social environment, the *spiritual/intellectual* goal of fundamentalists — such as jihadist actors — is to strip away dogma and interpretation and return to the pure truth of the original Word of God and the teachings of his Prophet: that is, to become true believers.[379] What this all means in practice, I'll now briefly explore.

Individual belief in a higher power is a near-universal phenomenon. There seems an

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[377] See for instance John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, "Who Will Speak for Islam," *World Policy Journal* 25, no. 3 (Fall 2008).

[378] See the anecdote of Abdel Bari Atwan on page 31 of *The Secret History of Al Qaeda* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

[379] Christina Hellmich, "Al-Qaeda – Terrorists, Hypocrites, Fundamentalists? The View From Within", *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2005): 39-42.

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immanence that occurs naturally among human beings — a feeling we are more than our physical selves. This mystical sense impels us to reach outside the confines of our minds and bodies to seek clues to our 'true' identity. Whether this is rooted in psychology, physiology or an eternal soul, the fact remains that spiritual belief is ubiquitous. There arises a corresponding sense of transcendence which reaches out and envelops us. This otherness at once joins us together with the universe and at the same moment exists in separateness above, around, and beyond ourselves. In western traditions, this sense often — although not always — equates to a being we can think of as God. God may certainly be an entirely fabricated creation of our fearful imaginations, but that doesn't stop billions from trying to understand how they can achieve favour with this supreme being.

Religion can be thought of as a mediation between the individual's mystic self and the — otherwise unknowable — transcendent essence. The mediating role comes about from the teachings of the world's great Prophetic figures, such as Abraham, Christ and Muhammad. Their books organize individual belief into collective action by establishing norms to help believers define their place in the cosmos and the means by which salvation (of one kind or another) can be achieved.

Most social science, including international relations, halts at this point: at the behavioural manifestations of religious belief. Emile Durkheim defined religion as "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden — beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them."[380] This functional definition seems adequate for studying the immediate, static behaviour of groups and the impact of variables upon them (and they upon various systems). Jeff Haynes suggests that because Islam predates the system of modern states — as do most world

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[380] Emile Durkheim quoted in "Lucian N. Leustean, "Towards An Integrative Theory of Religion and Politics," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 17 no. 4 (2005) 369.

religions — there is embedded within its living reality a constant tension between a transnational community joined by intersubjective beliefs and the secular compartmentalization of the Westphalian state.[381] Ultimately however, Haynes goes no further in making any unique claim for religion as an ideational form. He describes modern jihadist movements as resulting from the same historical-political inputs that might affect any other transnational grouping.[382] In essence, Durkheim, Haynes, and others view religion as a fairly routine social institution.

The cultural anthropologist Melford Spiro takes an intriguing step further. Spiro defined religion as "an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings."[383] His definition is illuminating in that he creates a structure of belief dependent on mutual constitution between humans and the "superhuman being(s)" of the universe. During the lifetime of a Prophet, the connection between the transcendent and the immanent is maintained. After his worldly death, however, the believers must struggle to reestablish the connection: through meditation, prayer, or other means. In the case of Islam, where the Prophet's teachings were so expansive, believers struggle to link with both the spiritual elements of the teaching and their instantiation in material structures of society. John Esposito writes:

> The individual, the basic unit of Muslim society, is Quranicaly charged as God's viceregent with the mission of carrying out God's will on earth. Muslims share in this ongoing process of creation, bringing order out of chaos, by endeavoring to produce the model society to be emulated by others. An interdependence exists; the individual is elevated through the community, and the community is organized by the individuals.[384]

Returning to Spiro's definition of religion, in which he describes the interactivity between believer and, in this case, God. I see Spiro as attempting to understand religions from inside the

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381 Jeff Haynes, "Transnational Religious Actors and International Politics," *Third World Quarterly* 22, no. 2 (2001) 144-7.
382 Namely, he attributes Islam's revivalist spirit to increasing secularism and western cultural and political hegemony. Haynes, "Transnational Religious Actors," 155.
383 Melford Spiro, quoted in Leustean, "Towards An Integrative Theory," 367. Spiro makes a sensible implicit acknowledgment that the meaning of "God" is different from place to place and time to time.
384 Esposito, *Islam*, 141. See also 162-202.

mind of the believer. As such, the important interactions which shape behaviour come less from historical, social or political challenges then from the key question, 'What does God want?' In this way, once the Prophet has died, the Book (or in any case, sacred scripture) of the Prophet becomes a living document that is constantly interrogated and reassessed in the search for divine guidance and affirmation.

A secular version of this notion might be found in the US Supreme Court. Justices facing constitutional challenges may ask themselves, 'What did the framers intend?' and 'How can I graft this intention onto present circumstances.' Of course Supreme Court justices don't expect the framers to provide supernatural guidance on how best to formulate some matter of jurisprudence (and then rewarding a correct judgment with blessings).[385] And so, while the US Constitution can be thought of somewhat as a living document, I would argue that for religious believers the holy books of faith have a uniquely powerful immediacy. They represent the will of a 'present' God at the moment a text is (re)read. This is at the heart of the "transhistorical norms" that unite believers of a religious community across space and time. The practices of faith — ritual prayer, charity, and so on — are conducted with a mindfulness of the believers who existed before, and who live on in an invisible state (in heaven, paradise, or a comparable condition). All are joined together by the immediate Will of God.

What are the practical implications of this potential 'bag of fog' I'm setting forth? John Esposito and Dalia Mogahed wrote of former US Defense Secretary, Robert McNamara: "[H]e now believes that what doomed the United States during the Vietnam War was a lack of knowledge about its enemy, the North Vietnamese. It didn't know what they thought or what they wanted."[386] Perhaps for this reason, the Gallup polling organization recently surveyed thousands

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385 For that matter, I don't believe American soldiers in Afghanistan seek to emulate the troops of the American Revolution, yet this is similar to the organic relationship jihadi leaders adopt with regard to the formative era of Islam.
386John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, "Battle for Muslims' Heart and Minds: The Road Not (Yet) Taken" in *Middle East Policy* xiv, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 29

of Muslim men and women around the world in an attempt to discover 'What do Muslims want?' After extensively analyzing the data, Esposito and Mogahed felt able to reject typical explanations of Muslim discontent — "old and deeply held stereotypes and presuppositions...that radicalism and terrorism were driven by a combination of religious fanaticism, poverty and unemployment".[387]

Instead, the study showed a worldwide community of Muslims in many lands and countries who long to live peacefully and in accordance with "the blueprint for an Islamic society", namely, *Sharia* law.[388] This desire, the authors note, "is not a call for theocracy".[389] Instead, the survey found that most Muslims view *Sharia* law in a considerably more liberal manner than we might expect. A majority of respondents indicated they didn't want religious leaders to have a direct role in politics and moreover, they believe that *Sharia* is entirely compatible with a society that cultivates values such as fairness, democracy, and respect for certain key individual freedoms. The problem is, many of the respondents felt that western powers were subverting the natural development of even benign forms of Islamic governance. And while the vast majority of respondents expressed views that opposed the extremism of bin Laden and his ilk,[390] the survey revealed ambivalence about the west's influence on Muslim societies and politics.

We've noted that many Muslim reformists and revolutionaries explicitly seek a return to the ideal model of community life as established in the days of the Prophet. What this means in practice is, of course, a question of profound significance. In any case, according to the literature, the defining struggle of Islamic life is to actively and best achieve 'Islam' in its full meaning as 'submission' to the divine will: "[T]his submission is not understood in a passive

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387 Esposito and Mogahed, "Battle for Muslims' Hearts and Minds," 30.
388 Esposito and Mogahed, "Battle for Muslims' Hearts and Minds," 39.
389 Esposito and Mogahed, "Battle for Muslims' Hearts and Minds," 40.
390 Only 7 percent said the attacks were "completely justified," and among this group their views are highly complex. Esposito and Mogahed, "Battle for Muslims' Hearts and Minds," 29.

sense, since the *Quran* declares that the Muslim's vocation is to strive (*jihad*) to realize God's will in history."[391] And thus the Gallup survey found that when Muslims were asked an open-ended question, 'What does *jihad* mean to you?' the most common responses were "'duty toward God,' a 'divine duty' or a 'worship of God'"[392]

The struggle now is for possession of the terms by which modern *jihad* is waged in the Muslim world. Mark Lynch has recently written an interesting essay in which he examines al-Qaeda's constructivist strategy. [393] On a purely tactical level, Lynch seems correct in recognizing al-Qaeda's deployment of 'strategic social construction' in trying to frame confrontation with the west as part of the sacred duty to defend the *umma* against unbelievers. As noted earlier, I share Lynch's belief that al-Qaeda hopes to undermine the legitimacy of western powers and mobilize popular support against the West and 'corrupt' Arab regimes by manipulating the symbols and myths of Islamic identity. Yet Lynch seems to conclude with a mostly superficial view of al-Qaeda's strategy, namely that jihadist propagandists seek to make terror an acceptable weapon, in contrast to western efforts at framing terror as criminal and unIslamic. In other words, the struggle seems to be over reconfiguring strategic interests via the terms of the battle, but ignoring the enduring identities from which these interests arose.[394]

In a sense, all the world's great religions are engaged in an ongoing struggle to reestablish on earth a connection with the brief, idealized historical period of divine guidance when a Prophet walked the earth. This can take a relatively literal form, or it can mean attempting to forge moral and ethical structures in harmony with divine will. In any event, it's a constant

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391 John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito, "Introduction," in *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, eds. John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1982), 4.

392 Esposito and Mogahed, "Battle for Muslims' Hearts and Minds," 33. Interestingly, the authors observe that the respondents described jihad "with no explicit militaristic connotation at all."

393 Mark Lynch, "Al-Qaeda's Constructivist Turn," from *Praeger Security International*. Retrieved from: http://psi.praeger.com The article can be found here: http://www.marclynch.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Al-Qaedas-Constructivism.pdf

394 See for instance the somewhat tedious terminological debate in which prominent scholar of Islam Juan Cole attempts to prove that Muhammad did not in fact give authorization to kill infidels or unbelievers for that sake alone (*kafir*, pl. *kuffar*). http://www.juancole.com/2003/01/koran-and-fighting-unbelievers.html

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process of reinterpretation. If Muslims around the world seek to live in accordance with divine will in order to seek the pleasure of God, then why shouldn't western strategists factor in the role of God and divine will in planning their response to al-Qaeda and other, similar groups?

I don't mean this literally, of course. But in so far as identity is shaped through interaction between individual believers and transcendent reflections of a divine being (again, all that counts here are the perceptions of the believers themselves, not our notions of whether or not God exists), then western strategy needs to also adopt a sharp constructivist stance and intervene in the constitutive process wherein hundreds of millions of people daily ask "What does God want?" Al-Qaeda (and others) seek to convince the faithful that God wants them to join war against the west.

There are progressive Islamic voices now attempting to address those who long to fulfill their Quranic obligations to struggle in the path of God yet are uneasy with the extreme violence of movements such as The Islamic State. Over one hundred prominent Islamic theologians recently wrote an open letter to ISIS leaders in which they described the organization's jihadist agenda as a perversion of the Faith. Intriguingly, they drew a distinction between I would call the *Quran*'s 'constitutive' and 'causal' norms: The scholars inform ISIS that the causal norms (what they call "specific" and "conditional") of early Islam were contextual to the *umma*'s early struggle for survival against Meccan power. The scholars instead call the attention of believers to the universal constitutive norms (what they call "the general and the unconditional") as the basis for modern community jurisprudence and individual behaviour. They conclude by warning that the mixture of the two in social media and elsewhere is confusing Muslims throughout the world.[395]

The struggle now should be for western experts to join with progressive Islamic

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[395] http://lettertobaghdadi.com/14/english-v14.pdf "…you have misinterpreted Islam into a religion of harshness, brutality, torture and murder."

ideological forces to build credible social institutions of community life in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and elsewhere. This should be done to demonstrate goodwill and as a mechanism to influence the congruence between western and Islamic notions of security — the former is physical, the latter intertwined with concerns for social justice and spiritual favour. The desire to do the will of God is the animating purpose of life for millions of people. To the degree we help shape the constitutive norms guiding achievement of these aims, the conflicts between Islam and the West will reduce and western intentions will be seen in a more benign light.

Sadly, this is unlikely. In Afghanistan - one frontline in the confrontation between western security interests and jihadist aims - the mobilization of secular development efforts has achieved only a mixed success. This is partly because the militarized approach of western forces has left mounds of Taliban corpses but relatively few secure areas through which troops and development experts can move freely. It's discouraging to read studies such as Christopher Henzel's of the US National War College whose useful review of the major historical influences on al-Qaeda is followed by typical policy prescriptions: work to strengthen "existing secular, Westernized classes in Muslim countries" while fighting jihadists using "intelligence and police work, with perhaps a role for special forces working with local partners in ungoverned areas."[396]

Strip away our outrage at the behaviour of al-Qaeda and we find a group acting upon widely shared transnational beliefs, or "transnational norms", that (mis)guide and constrain behaviour. [397] These norms are maintained ("reproduced") in the everyday ritualized 'transhistorical' interactions of believers that compose the central "social institutions" of the global Muslim community (prayer, pilgrimage, and so on). And therefore a particular interpretation of the *Quran* is created among al-Qaeda and associates such that the constitutive

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396 Christopher Henzel, "The Origins of al Qaeda's Ideology: Implications for US Strategy," *US Army War College Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 79.

397Sanjeeve Khagram, James V. Riker, and Kathryn Sikkink, "From Santiago to Seattle: Transnational Advocacy Groups Restructuring World Politics" in *Restructuring World Politics: Transnational Social Movements, Networks, and Norms,* eds. Sanjeev Khagram, James V. Riker, Kathryn Sikkink. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 13-15.

(principled) beliefs that define their identity allow a rough unity of thought and action as a transnational movement. Just as the jihadists seek to disrupt western social structures, we should also engage in 'strategic social construction.' Because in terms of both tactics and theory, today's bitter struggle is for al-Qaeda and other groups-as it was for The Prophet Muhammad-primarily a war of identity and ideas.

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