Conclusion

Great hope accompanied the growing attention given to religion in international scholarship during the early 2000s. According to its proponents, recognizing religion would allow for a better analytical toolbox in understanding the dynamics of a changing international order, provide an empirically more accurate description of a Global South and a 'world that simply refuses to be secular',[1] give a more appropriate description of a Western liberalism which 'grew out of a Judeo-Christian value matrix',[2] and enable the conditions for a genuine pluralist political order that included the 'radical alterity' of previously excluded religious subjects, institutions, and ideas.[3]

In contrast to these positions, I claim that the arguments for bringing religion into the centre of international politics remain blind to the accompanying costs of doing so. Because there are costs inherent in the processes of recognizing religion, it remains essential to study the complex processes that produce those costs. In other words, since the recognition of religion depends on religion being recognizable, it is essential to study the processes by which individuals and groups, conflicts and institutions, arguments and values became recognizable as religious. In each of the chapters in this book, I have studied different iterations of these processes and politics, asking what the consequences are: for example, what kinds of politics become possible, which actors are authorized and empowered, what relations are strengthened or undermined, and which actions and institutions are legitimated? In other words, to what and whom does the concept of religion refer, what does its use do, and how have these dynamics changed in the field of international politics?

[1] Sandal and James, 'Religion and International Relations Theory', p. 4.
[2] Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, p. 261.
[3] Pasha, 'Religion and the Fabrication of Race', 321.

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Through close conceptual readings, historiographical deconstruction, and epistemological critique, I have placed particular emphasis on the ways in which religion has emerged as an intelligible, standalone concept, identifiable from other aspects of social and political life. This is important because, without a study of the processes making religion recognizable in International Relations (IR), the discipline will continue to be stuck in a loop of legibility, that is, recognizing the institutions, actors, ideas, practices, clothes, symbols, arguments, and bodies already recognizable as religious. By so doing, IR will continue to reproduce the epistemic and political structures that produce the costs associated with recognition. By making the underlying assumptions, dynamics, and, ultimately, pitfalls of the literature arguing for recognition clear, my aim has been to promote the kinds of genealogical care in our work that would seek to understand rather than reproduce the struggles over recognition.

Throughout the book I made a number of substantial arguments. First, as discussed, I argued that there are both benefits and costs of recognizing religion in international politics, the latter of which has not been given enough attention. Second, I showed that these costs emerge from the fact that arguments and practices for recognizing religion in IR extend recognition to that or those who are already recognizable as such: organizations, institutions, conflict partners, practices, ideas, and so on. Acts of recognition assume the 'fact' of recognizability, which creates an epistemic loop. This 'loop of legibility', as I call it, builds on the assumption and expectation of a knowable and differentiable religious subject, ignoring the conceptual, epistemological, and historiographical politics of religion. In this sense, religion is always an already-present and intelligible category of political thought and action that can be included or excluded, managed and governed, controlled or engaged with. In Chapters 1 and 2, I engaged in a detailed analysis of how this tendency has influenced two kinds of approaches to religion in IR theory and scholarship, which I categorized as the 'multicultural approach' and the 'genealogical approach'. In Chapter 3, I continued to demonstrate how this tendency is inherent in the grammar of international recognition more broadly, arguing that it is a part of the costs of being recognized.

A core argument I made in Chapter 3 of this book is that the possibility of knowing a subject – the assumption of epistemic sovereignty – sits at the centre of IR's attempts to recognize religion. I developed

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this argument by building on the work by Patchen Markell and his rereading of Hegel's theories of recognition, which are the foundation of IR recognition scholarship. What is important to remember here is that the grammar of recognition – that is, the underlying structure of the arguments and practices related to the recognition of religion in IR – needs a recognizable subject in order to proceed. Whether it be a religious minority, individual, institution, or idea, it must be differentiable and intelligible, that is, is identifiable as something different from that which it is not, such as nationalism, culture, politics, or race. Without this subject, there is no criterion by which a successful recognition can be measured. The arguments for the protection of religious freedom, as we saw in Chapter 2, lose their political and moral justification if the means of defining the recipient of the protective measurements get lost, or if it becomes a matter of conceptual politics to define who is worthy of protection and who is not.

The policies and theories of recognition built into the arguments for the protection of religious freedom will, in this sense, continue to recognize the already recognizable: those groups who align themselves or who are politically and legally able to claim alignment with the existing definition of the term. As we saw in Chapter 2, this means that built-in biases – such as the Habermasian definition of acceptable 'liberal' religion – will continue to rule out those subjects who do not resonate on that register of recognizability. The arguments for recognizing religion in IR will, in this sense, reproduce the structures of power that allow certain subjects to be recognizable while others are not. It will only recognize the already recognizable.

This loop of legibility is particularly problematic because efforts to recognize religion in IR come with a major claim: that recognizing religion would fundamentally diversify the discipline and the liberal orders it tends to. Hooking onto other parallel discussions regarding the need to make the ontological, epistemic, and methodological make-up of the discipline more pluralistic, scholars portray religion as the epitome of radical alterity. Since religion had marked the limits of the public and political for centuries, making it part of the vocabulary by which scholars thought about the international would, so the argument goes, open up the discipline to a whole range of new perspectives: different ontological assumptions manifested in the various worldviews, novel forms of knowledge to relate to, and a new hierarchy of norms with which to re-evaluate an increasingly weakening

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liberal – or even neoliberal – value system.[4] However, if these efforts remain stuck in the loop of legibility, the engagement would not, in fact, expand the frameworks through which relevant and important voices, arguments, institutions, issues, and conflicts are evaluated. Rather, it would reaffirm those and that which are already part of the prevailing scheme of intelligibility. Anything or anyone that lies outside the range of the recognizable does not just remain on the outside; they remain outside an order which, according to its proponents, is more diverse and just than before.

One might argue that those or that which is unrecognizable become recognizable through the struggle for recognition. In order to show why this is not the case, in Chapter 3 I tapped into a conversation between Jacques Rancière and Axel Honneth, who align themselves with the two positions on recognition which I termed 'multicultural' and 'genealogical' throughout Chapters 1 and 2. What became clear is that the main schism between these two positions is the conceptualization of the subject. While Honneth's struggle for recognition includes a subject that is realized in and through its interaction with an 'other' – but which is, prior to this process, identifiable as a subject entering into the dynamics of recognition – Rancière rejects the assumption that there is a subject on behalf of which recognition can be claimed (or rejected). Understanding this distinction is important because it changes the question and underlying assumptions about the recognition of religion in IR.

Since the recognition of religion has costs, I am looking for another way to approach the question, one that does not build on the assumption of epistemic sovereignty or that marginalizes unrecognizable subjects. To this end, I joined the Canadian political theorist James Tully in shifting the conversation from struggles *for* the recognition of religion to the struggles *over* the recognition of religion. What that

[4] Barbato, 'Conceptions of the Self for Post-Secular Emancipation'; Barbato and Kratochwil, 'Towards a Post-Secular Political Order?'; Bettiza, *Finding Faith in Foreign Policy*; Byrnes and Katzenstein, *Religion in an Expanding Europe*; Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*; Cesari, *We God's People*; Fox, 'Religion as an Overlooked Element of International Relations'; Hassner, *Religion on the Battlefield*; Haynes, *Faith-Based Organizations at the United Nations*; Lynch, *Wrestling with God*; Sandal and Fox, *Religion in International Relations Theory*; Shah and Philpott, 'The Fall and Rise of Religion in International Relations'; Thomas, *The Global Resurgence of Religion*; Wilson, 'Theorizing Religion as Politics in Postsecular International Relations'.

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means is shifting our focus onto what the criteria are by which religion could become recognizable in the first place. What are the structures that allow for certain aspects of social and political life to become recognizable as religious? What are the actors and institutions that gain authority and legitimacy through these definitory exercises? And what are the consequences of the epistemic mastery of the concept of religion in various cases and places?

Chapters 4 and 5 did this kind of work and circled back to one of the most common questions in the study of IR: the emergence of new states. The chapters illustrated how the concept of religion became part of the state-building enterprises of Pakistan and Israel following the partitioning of British India and Mandate Palestine. Here, we saw examples of the multitude of processes by which 'religion' and the language of a 'Muslim' nation and a 'Jewish' state were used to describe minorities, identify borders, and analyse conflicts. We saw how the conceptual apparatus of religion was put into use in negotiations over claims for independence and various visions of statehood, as well as how it structured both the analysis of the conflicts that followed and the expectations over how these conflicts would develop. We saw how the concept of religion structured the struggles over political order, authority, and legitimacy. Most importantly, however, we saw how these processes were not limited to each individual case but were rather part of an entangled global web and circulation of law, institutions, individuals, and ideas.[5]

Throughout the book I sought to understand the politics and history of 'religion' in IR in relation to the conditions and dynamics of political order and change, the consequences and costs of various forms of representational politics, the detailed mechanisms of rupture in hereditary social hierarchies, the politics of subjectivization, and the ongoing renegotiation of the relationship between religion and politics at the global, national, and local levels. I have argued for the need to shift away from rehabilitating arguments for the recognition of religion, as they come with built-in assumptions about its epistemic autonomy. By freeing the discipline from its dependency on the concept of religion, we can unlock the vast resources of scholarship from religious studies, history, critical legal studies, anthropology, and sociology.

[5] For the concept of 'circulations of law', please see Hussin, 'Circulations of Law'.

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The book makes contributions to three distinct fields of study. First, it builds on and advances critical scholarship on religion and politics, which examines, among other things, the politics of law and religion, the epistemic dimensions of secularist knowledge systems, and the politics of religious freedom. While engaging with critiques of the presumed epistemic autonomy of religion, the book distinguishes itself by grounding these critiques in a broader theoretical analysis of the conditions that make recognition possible. It argues that the reproduction of rigid, reified notions of religion is not confined to specific contexts such as legal frameworks, secularist regimes, or discourses on religious freedom. Instead, these phenomena are tied to a 'grammar of recognition' that inevitably presupposes the existence of a predefined 'religious' subject. The book suggests that this looping legibility – of recognizing only what is already deemed recognizable – is one of the most significant and pervasive costs of recognizing religion across different contexts.

This speaks, secondly, to the field of international political theory where the book forwards critical scholarship on recognition, highlighting the need for a better understanding of the conditions of epistemic recognition.[6] The book contributes to these accounts by showing that available categories of intelligibility – such as religion – set the conditions for subjectivity, even if they are performatively constituted. In this way, the book goes beyond the critique of recognition by conceptualizing that critique as a study of its costs. This allows for a detailed study of the politics of recognition in colonial and postcolonial history in Chapters 4 and 5.

Addressing the colonial politics of religion in South Asia, the Middle East, and the late British Empire, the book, lastly, contributes to the fields of colonial and imperial history, and the national histories of British India, Pakistan, Palestine, and Israel, but, more specifically, draws much needed attention to the entangled histories and politics of South Asia and the Middle East.[7] The book advances emerging

[6] Bartelson, 'Three Concepts of Recognition'; Bartelson, 'Recognition'; Grzybowski, 'The Paradox of State Identification'; Zarakol, 'Sovereign Equality as Misrecognition'; Epstein, 'The Productive Force of the Negative and the Desire for Recognition'; Epstein et al., 'Misrecognition in World Politics'; Kessler and Herborth, 'Recognition and the Constitution of Social Order'; Sending, 'Recognition and Liquid Authority'.

[7] Dubnov and Robson, *Partitions*; Devji, *Muslim Zion*.

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research on the intra-colonial and intra-imperial relations between India and Palestine and the early independent states of Pakistan and Israel in the first half of the twentieth century. It demonstrates how ideas about religion circulated between Mandate Palestine and British India, influencing both imperial governance and anti-colonial struggles. Finally, the book deepens the historiography of South Asia and the Middle East by linking the political and epistemic governance of religion to broader debates in international political theory and theories of nation- and state-building. The book thereby identifies the costs of recognition as a problem for the international system and its institutions where the costs affect the functioning of the system and inflect its functioning with a particular kind of political and epistemic violence.

With this in mind the book also has practical implications for addressing a wide range of global challenges related to international conflict, minority governance, and transitional justice, challenging scholars and policymakers to critically engage with their colonial legacies. The book's analysis extends to pressing geopolitical contexts, including the ongoing violations against international law in Palestine and Israel. It highlights how the conceptual politics of religion remains at the core of the debates on antisemitism, Zionism, and genocide and provides context for the analysis of the ways in which categories of religion have been mobilized as tools of governance, frameworks for delegitimization of critique, and bases for resistance, showing how these processes institutionalize exclusions, marginalize alternative solidarities, deepen divisions, and undermine conflict resolution.[8] As illustrated in Chapters 4 and 5, the elusive nature of the concepts of religion is in this way not simply instrumental to those struggling for the independence of a nation or negotiating the social contract for a heterogeneous group within a state. Rather, it is part and parcel of the very epistemic and conceptual web within which global political dynamics are entangled.

The book is an inter- and transdisciplinary study which connects international political theory and history with critical religious studies. It not only transcends national borders but shows how those borders took shape in the context of transnational entanglement with border-making processes on different continents. The book also speaks to

[8] India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC).

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legal and public policy debates on the challenges of living with social and religious difference, the politics of recognition, violence and toleration, and the conflict-ridden histories of minorities in national politics and international relations. Historically, these challenges have shaped the dynamics of international order, and they will continue to do so in the future.

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