

## Davutoglu's *Paradigm*, Winkel's *Epistémé* and Political Science in Malaysia

Danial Mohd Yusof

Department of Political Science  
International Islamic University Malaysia

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### Abstract

Husserlian phenomenology and its terminology are utilised to justify the sociology of Islam and its essentialist response through the course of transcultural exchanges and sedimentation with the irreconcilable *weltanschauung* of the West. At the same time, the issue of structure and reliable knowledge is considered through the difficult relationship between revivalist religion and state politics where political legitimacy and the development of institutions is a feature of socio-political fact. Here, Malaysian political culture and democracy is used as an example. It makes out that socio-political realities, if not co-incident with discourses of reliable knowledge and moral society, are representations of the conciliation of interests with specific value orientation with regards to alternative conceptions of moral society.

### Keywords

Islam, paradigm, political theory, transculture, political culture, democracy

### The Oscillating Nature of Socio-political, Cultural and Theoretical Studies with Theology

By contextualising issues of political representation and intellectual activity in Western modernity through its historiography and background in philosophy and values, the ambivalence between techniques and values in contemporary Muslim societies as a transcultural process reflects the connection of their entwined yet different historical, institutional, cultural, religious, ideological and value systems as competing discourses in the politics of identity.

According to Davutoglu (1994), the axiological-political differences of alternative Western and Muslim *weltanschauungs* or paradigms, the study of contemporary Islam as a subject of social sciences, especially international politics, becomes a methodological obstacle for an ample study of the dynamics of Islam as civilisation through the obscure nomenclature of its analysis without reference to the roots of conflicting issues. Nomenclature (e.g. fundamentalist, radi-

cal and liberal) and conceptual (e.g. religion and *din*) structure generate theoretical and semantic disparity of perception that require more astute fundamental analytical concepts (e.g. ontological proximity and epistemological differences) to facilitate the oscillating nature of socio-political, cultural and theoretical studies with theology.<sup>1</sup>

‘The interrelationship of ontology, epistemology, axiology and politics might be a meaningful anchor point to understand the irreconcilability of the philosophical bases of Islamic and Western political theories, images and cultures. The principle difference between Islamic and Western *weltenshauungs* is related to the contrast between the “ontologically determined epistemology” of Islam and the “epistemologically determined ontology” of the Western philosophical traditions. This difference is especially significant in understanding the axiological basis of political legitimacy and the process of justification.’ (Davutoglu 1994: 5)

Ontology, as a study of being and its utility in political theory based on modern Husserlian phenomenology and its terminology, generate a philosophical methodology about social reality based on self-perception and common experience. Appropriated in a certain way, its methodology corresponds to the *differend*, essentially contested concepts and hegemony of alternative *selbstverständnisse* (self-perceptions) and a perpetuating philosophical and theological history of both the West and Islam as a transcendental discourse that generates perennial impact on the immanent and transcendent categories.

As a strategic appropriation, phenomenology serves to explain the transcultural or civilisational dynamics that occur in the *lebenswelt*. The corresponding acculturation, appropriation and resistance to the value system and institutions of Western modernity with respect to the ontological consciousness of Muslim societies and their commonalities as well as countering and co-opting discourses of Islamic epistemology reflect upon the *lebenswelt* as the topography of discourses and sedimentation.

Davutoglu appropriates Husserlian phenomenology in explaining the evolution and transformation of the idea or consciousness of God in Western philosophico-theological history. Its impact on their epistemological and axiological perspectives generates a less theo-centric and more nature-centered cosmology and anthropocentric epistemology modern philosophical leanings as ‘ontological proximity’. This consciousness asserts an incessant link between the

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<sup>1</sup> Excluding quoted sources, the transliteration of Arabic words in this paper follows the form of the International Journal of Middle-East Studies. Apart from these, there are occasions in which certain words have become transliterated and naturalised into the romanised Malay language (e.g. shariah and Islam Hadhari) and are thus left as such when referring to the local context.

perspectives and values of ancient mythology, ancient philosophy, Christian theology and modern philosophy and is conceived as a more inclusive contrast to the ontological consciousness of Muslim societies. Philosophico-theological history and the modern interlinking of secularised epistemological sources i.e. revelation and reason, axiological positivism and an ontology that is dependent on human knowledge are characteristics of contemporary Western civilization that serve to explain the phenomenology that underlie the theories, institutions, cultures and political images of Western *weltanschauungs* (1994: 12–45).

Davutoglu goes on to describe the “ontologically determined epistemology” of the Islamic paradigm i.e. *tauhid* as founded upon a theo-centric cosmology that pervades the Muslim political consciousness. The Quranic base is pivotal in systematising a paradigmatic unity among the theological, philosophical and spiritual methodologies of Islamic thought i.e. *kalām*, *falsafa* and *tasawwuf* in generating an epistemology that reflects the ‘theoretical and imaginative inter-connections’ and axiology of the Islamic *weltanschauung* based on the ontological transcendency and unity of Allah (1994: 48–86). In the modern context, this position is subjected to the transcultural pressures and sedimentation of a Western hegemonic articulation. In this significance, Davutoglu performs a genetic phenomenology to describe the sedimentation and transcendental intersubjectivity of both the West and Islam.

As fundamentally irreconcilable *weltanschauungs*, the basis of any comparative analysis between the two concerning the validation of their socio-political systems, issues of legitimacy and political authority, power and pluralism and their “imagination of the universal political system” is expected to reflect the axiology that governs academic discourse as political representation. In the *lebenswelt*, the *epoche* or suspension of philosophico-theoretical debate beyond pure phenomenology as a methodology is improbable and the individual is motivated to evaluate, based on a subscribed axiology, the experience of others. With hegemony and transcultural exchanges occurring through the colonial and secularist political structures and demarcation within the nation-state configuration, the political imagination of these alternative *weltanschauungs* are stressed in the modern context (Davutoglu, 1994: 201–202). They provide corresponding streams of normative hegemonic and apologetic counter-hegemonic discourses that are based on theologico-socio-scientific conceptualisations and nomenclatures at phenomenological odds with each other. The filtering receptivity of these alternative *weltanschauungs* in the exchange of discourses in the postmodern context of identity politics and differences under the guise of moderate scholarship reflects flexibility in the intentionality of ontological consciousness. This occurs through axiological comparison and evaluation that might lead to conversion, subscription, rejection or appropriation in transcultural dynamics as contingent constituents of sedimentation or purification.

Davutoglu's work itself is symptomatic of a Muslim scholar's appropriation of a modern philosophy that is exclusively developed through continental philosophico-theoretical pedigree with the likes of Lambert, Kant, Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger. As political rhetoric that aims at establishing theoretical consistency between *weltenshauung* and ideals and a polity that exceeds the demarcation of nation-states, the phenomenon of contemporary Islam also finds itself defined and imposed through the West's hegemonic political imagination and organisational structures. A plurality of *selbstverstandnises* within the ontological proximity of both *weltenshauungs* in this transcultural scenario is itself a primary obstacle to the essentially contested conceptual structures and nomenclature in the intertwining discourse of theology and the social sciences.

To this degree, the centrality of the first person consciousness and intersubjectivity in phenomenology, and as an inconsistent producer and user of signs in deconstruction, highlights the problem of pure description, authentic representation and hegemonic articulation. The issue of power and representation also has its technical parallel in post-structuralism. In post-structuralism, signs are considered as an unstable and ambiguous entity whose meaning is open to the various interpretations of individuals and their experiences, thus, susceptible to deconstructive critique as mentioned previously. In the case of Islam, its ontological hierarchy disallows the proximity between absolute and created beings, which places a significant limitation on the solipsistic or primary approximation of the self in its ontology, epistemology and axiology but necessitates the self as a fallible representative of the transcendent.

"Epistemologically defined ontology" and the grounding of "reliable knowledge as socially relevant knowledge" in Western philosophico-theoretical history have produced contested conceptual structures and nomenclature through which modern critical tools thrive. Eric A. Winkel (1988) peruses the influence of the concept of structure as a primary contribution to modern critique in social theory and its discourse on progress through discourse theory and historicism. This is then compared to Islamic revival, which is not an epiphenomenon of modernity, but is itself when compared and contrasted to the various Western *weltenshauungs*, a quintessential inquiry of values, ideas and techniques based on alternative ontological foundations that aim to resolve problems in societies.

## **Theology and Socio-political Fact**

The ontological status of politics in Islam as metaphysical is linked with the epistemology of Islamic revival as an intellectual evaluation of morality in society. The reflecting capacity of both the individual and society as a representation and structure of morality raises questions of "self subsisting" and "self propagating"

or structurally enforced reliable knowledge vis-à-vis the Western amelioration of socially relevant knowledge as a perpetual revivalist program.

Winkel asserts that as opposed to intellectual approaches to knowledge and morality, society itself as an entity and the object of socially relevant knowledge is non-intellectual and uncritically accepting of received traditions, habits or situational ethics valid within the particular context of time and space. Reliable knowledge in Islam presents perpetual tension through *tajdid* (revival) that confronts 'socially relevant interpretations of knowledge' (1988: 49–51). The issue of structure and reliable knowledge is addressed through his citation of Voll (1994: 176) that explains the difficult relationship between revivalist religion and state politics in Islamic history. The lack of consensus concerning issues of political legitimacy in broad institutional terms affects the synthesis of environment and human nature, religion and society, reliable knowledge and socially relevant knowledge. Through these, societies reconcile or mitigate their contradictions through structure and sedimentation of cultural interpretations. Winkel, through his reading of El-Zein critique of Geertz's non-historical approach to Islam, questions the vigour and permanence of the social powers of resolution with periods of 'liminality' (the threshold between different periods' significance in flux and crisis, for example, colonialism and economic depression). Such experiences may weaken, for example, 'religious symbols and belief in the face of upheaval and contradiction in previously coincident social conditions' (1973: 230). This situation qualifies as Durkheim's anomie (in his 1893's *The Division of Labour in Society*), a deregulation in society where social norms are unclear or confused and no longer define and control the activities of society and have an impact on intellectual activity and epistemological assessment.

Winkel extends the contemporary pre-occupation of revivalists with the Caliphate as coinciding with the difficulty of religious legitimacy accorded to institutions and structural form of reliable knowledge. Referring to Binder's analysis of Al-Ghazali's theory of Islamic government (1955), the Caliphate as a structural solution is related to the maintenance of order, the collective unity and historical continuity of the Muslim community, and derives the functional and institutional authority from the *shari'a* that is directly related to the description and prescription of human nature. The structural distribution of political, economic and cultural values through the justification of power and authority in Islam as reliable knowledge in complex heterogeneous societies as socially relevant knowledge makes it problematic as a self-contained context and praxis and as a system that facilitates and conditions individual morality. The search in modernity is for how societies create meaning through discourse and practice rather than that for reliable knowledge.

## Praxis as Pro-active Substitute for Theory and Reliable Knowledge

Through discourse theory, socially relevant knowledge transpires at the expense of a theory of truth based on an untenable achievement of consensus on values, if not also interests, in society and the acceptance of a final and incommensurate plurality of potential value systems. Another epistemological approach for objective knowledge, historicism, attempts detachment as a way to evaluate value exchange and political legitimacy. This it does through sedimentation via Fernand Braudel's *longue duree* (a long span of history from which changes — minute, continuing and in due course, momentous — can be perceived in society) from which insular, elitist, ideological and hegemonic assumptions can be abstractly identified and isolated from structure. Social truth is not just evaluated within society but is also comparative as a plurality of truths within itself and among other societies. This approach still inextricably links knowledge with power and control (this includes the role of a supposedly detached scholar), as according to Foucault, especially where knowledge is perceived as an understanding to manipulate the environment and is pervasive in the *lebenswelt* and contributes to the development and conditioning of our foundational *weltanschauungs* (Winkel 1988: 68–85). As an example, Winkel cites Illich's *Deschooling Society* (1972) in his identification of this deluding ethos in the educational system as a distortion of structure through economic and political interests that question the validity of socially relevant truths:

'Everywhere the hidden curriculum of schooling initiates the citizen to the myth that bureaucracies guided by scientific knowledge are efficient and benevolent. Everywhere this same curriculum instils in the pupil the myth that increased production will provide a better life. And everywhere it develops the habit of self-defeating consumption of services and alienating production, the tolerance for institutional dependence, and the recognition of institutional rankings. The hidden curriculum of school does all this in spite of contrary efforts undertaken by teachers and no matter what ideology prevails (Illich in Winkel 1988: 86).

The distortions caused by power politics in Islamic history explain the problematic and critical relationship between revivalist religion and state politics concerning structural legitimacy and political order. So much so that Winkel cites Voll as saying that the religious critique of politics is the 'heart of Muslim revivalism' and extends the possibility through the problem of structure that reliable knowledge cannot be ontologically coincident with socially relevant knowledge to disable the element of power and control until a period of liminality (in this context Winkel mentions the Iranian Revolution). There is also an allusion to transculture and the appropriation of postmodern critical tools by Muslim revivalist scholars to engage 'epistemologically distorting interests' and a

Sufi perspective to remove the interest of ego and a realisation of the theomorphic nature of mankind (1988: 88–93).

As helpful as structural and ideological appropriation are in deconstructing the Westernisation, Winkel describes them as modern Gnosticism, solipsistic and reifying the individual, and scientific as opposed to the post-structural approach that values discourse and practice to debate social presuppositions and reality. The tautology of revolutionary self-understanding and pathology of modern life as an amelioration of socially relevant knowledge as “temporarily” reliable knowledge is expected to be overcome (Minoge in Winkel, 1988: 326–333). Again, this transpires at the expense of self-realisation and reliable knowledge in the structural sense, which also perceives that the moral individual is not necessarily transformed by a deteriorating society.

Winkel goes on to suggest a reassessment and appeasement among Sunni, Shi‘ite and Sufist revivalists in the development of critical tools in Muslim societies that may work with the appropriation of secular and critical approaches to knowledge, in this case the varying approaches in the social sciences. But he is equally wary of an ecumenism in Islam that may degenerate into antinomianism and relativism in the reconciling of socially relevant and reliable knowledge bound with issues of infrastructure and the individual involving legitimate authority, culture, social institutions and services, values and interests (Winkel, 1988: 340–342). Moreover, intellectual activity is itself susceptible to ‘interests, power and needs’ and that an apathetic society is more difficult to provoke than oppressed Muslim societies that may in fact appropriate religious authority as socially relevant and politically reliable. This is essentially why Winkel tended to perceive Islamic revival as a perpetual spiritual and not necessarily political phenomenon, and to avoid the pitfalls of *homo significans* (1988: 347–351).

The nomenclature and conceptual structure of some contemporary “fundamentalist” programs are themselves egocentric or socio-centric in their evaluation of existing Muslim or non-Muslim society and structure but also against the legitimacy of antinomianism in socially relevant knowledge. There is the appeal of identifying moral society as a ‘floating signifier’ (Laclau, 1993) in the continuing dialectic of a truth system or its continuous re-creation, appropriation and reconciliation in modern politics. The co-existence of modern politics with alternative truth systems and the element of transculture contribute to the continuing strain between religious revival and state politics:

‘Both societies (modern and fundamentalist), paradoxically, are liberal, one assuming that institutions and material satisfaction allow the individual to achieve the good life, the other assuming that physical behaviour modification and ideological soundness will allow the individual to achieve the good life’ (Winkel, 1988: 351)

## Islam, Values and Politics in Malaysia

The modernisation and industrialization of Malaysia (NIC or Newly Industrialized Country) as the Government's goals of growth, equity and stability crucial for nation-building and development of a post-colonial society.

Loh and Boo Teik (2002: 1–2) identify the debate on 'Asian values' as a reluctance to accept 'Western liberal democratic triumphalism', referring to claims in the works of Huntington (1991), Fukuyama (1989), Diamond and Plattner (1992). "Asian values" are understood as a cultural temperament towards firm leadership and stability in government, communitarian rather than individualist, collective welfare over individual rights and innate respect for social accord and consensus instead of dissent. As a pre-cursor to 'Asian democracy', Asian values generated a counter discourse to 'pluralism, individual rights and civil liberties' associated with Western democracy and justifying authoritarian elements of governing. Boo Teik (2002: 72–73) considers Asian values and Asian democracy as an initially viable ideological project of the Asian elites to control mass political participation within their own states while seeking a potent voice for Asia in the international community. However, the economic and political crisis that afflicted East Asian countries circa 1997 and 1998, highlighted dissident discourses against the representation of the elites that generated familiarly Western but indigenist variations of arguments about governance, transparency, accountability and the wider social, political and institutional reforms. This is what makes Asian values and Asian democracy as floating signifiers bound to elitist or populist designs.

The analysis of the discourses and practices around the theme of democracy in contemporary Malaysian politics in Kok Wah and Boo Teik (2002) reflect the complexity of discursive elements that shape the pragmatism of its social reality. They identify how the discourse of developmentalism in a civic "territorial nation" through the successful evolution of political, socio-economic and cultural dirigisme became implanted as a cultural feature of political stability. It offsets ethnic and cultural sensitivities of a genealogical "ethnic nation" that is pervasive in the Malaysian social context with limits imposed on democratic discourse. Developmentalism gives prominence to the discourse of the individual as a consumer and a cultural product of capitalism, and through individuation, as subjects of social administration in civil society.

### *On the Malaysian social context*

'... The indigenous Malay nationalists sought to project the genealogical ethnic Malay nation on to the modern state in the struggle for independence. Such a nation-state which gave pre-eminence to Malay cultural attributes like Islam, the Malay language and the traditional rulers, would allow for the continuity of the new nation-state with the Malay past with which the country/land was originally associated. In Malaysia's



multi-ethnic society, however, the promotion of this genealogical ethnic nation based on Malay cultural myths, memories and emblems ran up against the demand of a civic territorial nation (based on common citizenship rights) which the non-Malay immigrant leaders believed would better protect their communities.' (Kok Wah, 2002: 22)

*On developmentalism and discourse of the individual in Malaysian politics*

'But, above all, mass consumerism disaggregates the members of an ethnic group and of Malaysian society, into individuals. One consumes as individuals, not as groups or as communities... No doubt, many Malaysians fear the coercive laws, especially the Internal Security Act (ISA). Nonetheless, an equally if not more compelling reason why the middle class and business classes rallied behind the Barisan Nasional (National Alliance) government, even when critical civil liberties and social rights were denied them by the BN's developmental state, is because they valorise political stability nowadays... a vote for the BN was a vote for stability, for uninterrupted economic growth, for rising incomes, for maintaining standards of living and consumerist lifestyles... Otherwise, measures to combat political scandals, corruption, human rights abuses, media controls, etc. did not elicit sustained popular support (Kok Wah, 2002: 45–49)

Kok Wah concludes by disagreeing with both re-emergent modernisation theories, that perceived political liberalisation as quickly resulting from economic development and reforms, and the re-formulation of neo-modernist theories that considered cultural factors as an important consequence to socially relevant political development. He believed the former as too economic based as a structural argument and that Asian values and Asian democracy is an ideological and cultural essentialist response to legitimise authoritarian developmental states against the demands of liberal democracy and Malaysia's growing discourse of the individual. In this sense, human agency and praxis ensures the particularity, relativity and antinomian corollary of politics as socially relevant management of interests and their value orientation.

In Malaysia's case, transcending, unifying or managing ethno-religious identities in the context of the modern nation-state especially nation-building refers to the construction of a new social imaginary i.e. a Malaysian identity or nation as assimilative. Through her operational political culture, the emphasis on ethno-religious differences suppresses an agreeable definition of Bangsa Malaysia and remains an accommodative identity. At the same time, interests that evolved *Bumiputera* as an extension of 'Malayness', explain that identity is contested and subject to change. Malaysia's political culture as consociational is understood as the management of conflict scenario in a developing democracy and through nation-building, is expected to evolve but with difficulty.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bumiputera or "son of the soil" groups together the Malays and the aboriginal population of Malaysia under one category.

Constitutionally, the defining features of ‘Malayness’ in Article 160 (2) i.e. language, royalty and religion are secure as dominant features of Malaysian political culture. The Islamic resurgence of the 1970s, the “inculcation of Islamic values in public administration” and the creation of various Islamic institutions in the 1980s and Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi’s *Islam Hadhari* (Developmental or Civilizational Islam) reinforces that Islam, as the official religion of Malaysia, is operationalized as civil religion and a factor for national development. Furthermore, Article 11(4) of the Federal Constitution, part of a pre-Merdeka contract between Malays and non-Malays, states that the preaching of religious doctrine can be regulated by state law. It was originally intended to protect Malays from internationally funded proselytising forces due to official support from the colonial government that could destabilize the country. The concern on Islam and religious freedom with regards to provisions of the Federal Constitution often focuses on the rhetoric of Malaysia as an Islamic or secular state; the jurisdiction of the shariah courts and the civil courts in cases where both Muslim and non-Muslim parties are involved; and on religious propagation as mentioned above, marriage, custody and property in religious conversion; deviationist activities; and religious planning and establishment. Due to the pluralistic nature of Malaysian society and its political culture as reflected in the Federal Constitution — government led inter-faith dialogues and coalition politics will remain a mainstay of her political ideology (Ahmad Ibrahim 1978; June 1st 2006, [www.sun2surf.com](http://www.sun2surf.com)).

Syed Ahmad Hussein (2002) analyses Islam as value orientation affecting the theme of democracy in Malaysian politics where its Malay Muslim community, through discourses and practices, have grasped at a measured convergence of the interests of political Islam with the concerns of democracy. This convergence is perceived through the performance of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) and Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS or the Islamic party) with the compatibility thesis between Islamic values and democracy as a broader reform and intellectual program that ‘goes beyond the instrumentalist exploitation of Islam for purposes of legitimation’ (Hussein, 2002: 102). Hussein cites Eickelman and Piscatori (2002: 75) who state that ‘the problem of interpretation of symbols and controls of institutions that produce or sustain them’ in Muslim politics is a continuing process of religious legitimacy that involve dissenters and the ruling elite. This convergence and the fact that Muslim politics in the structure of a plural and concessionist polity like Malaysia are made up of transcultural discourses and practices may actually direct it towards an ecumenism that will evolve Islam as a critique of politics.

I reiterate the assertion which extends the possibility through the problem of structure that reliable knowledge cannot be ontologically coincident with

socially relevant knowledge to disable the element of power and control until a period of liminality. The historicist's interest in this would be of the nature of the transformation in that threshold in the *longue duree* of Malaysia. By understanding Foucault, to whom knowledge is linked to power and control and is pervasive in the *lebenswelt*, this convergence is a short term evaluation of Muslim politics in Malaysia where contributes to the development and conditioning of foundational *weltenshauungs*. It makes out that socio-political realities, if not co-incidental with discourses of reliable knowledge and moral society, are representations of the conciliation of interests with specific value orientation with regards to alternative conceptions of moral society. It qualifies as a statement for the amelioration of socially relevant knowledge, sedimentation of socio-political habitualities and necessitates the self and society as fallible representatives of the transcendent.

## Conclusion

Transcultural exchanges and sedimentation of Western socio-political thought and culture in Muslim societies have contributed to its appropriation and strategic essentialism by contemporary Islamic discourse as a form of praxis. More importantly, this option is advocated in relation to the possibility of Islamic institutions and the production of Islamic discourse itself as being a feature of the articulation of political legitimacy in the context of Islam as socio-political fact. The spectrum of Islamic discourse is therefore needed to ascertain praxis in a particular society.

Nomenclature and conceptual structure is determined by the interrelationship of ontology, epistemology, axiology and politics that produces transcultural convergence and conflict between the bases of Islamic and Western culture and identity. This occurs through different self-perceptions and sedimentation in the *lebenswelt* or world of common experience as a domain of objective knowledge that includes the religious, scientific, social and political as topography of discourses that sustain essentialist positions.

To recap, there is an inherent hidden agenda on the part of individual researchers as culturally, historically, religiously or ideologically placed and human beings — they cross the boundary from description to evaluation by choosing and appropriating data, methods of analysis and presentation and consequently both reveal and conceal knowledge, understanding and truth. In this way, phenomenology explains the acculturation, appropriation and resistance to the value system and institutions of Western modernity and its own internal dialectics in relation to the ontological consciousness and paradigm of Muslim societ-

ies. Axiological comparison and evaluation lead to conversion, subscription, rejection or appropriation in transcultural dynamics as contingent constituents of sedimentation. Simultaneously, it highlights the problem of pure description, authentic representation and hegemonic articulation from which Muslim societies experience internal conflict, reconcile or mitigate their disagreements through the sedimentation of cultural interpretations and their institutional forms in the national context. This leads to a form of religious anomie where a contested Islam as socio-political fact and primary identity establishes itself as praxis whose meaning is confined as socially relevant knowledge through a constant recreation of truth and ideals.

The critical relationship between Islam and state politics concerning conventional development goals of growth, equity, stability and political order, democracy and autonomy, and current concerns for sustainable development implies that reliable knowledge cannot be ontologically coincident with socially relevant knowledge. Intellectual activity and religious legitimacy may themselves become appropriated as socially relevant and politically reliable knowledge. This is why the Islamic identity as political phenomenon avoids the over-emphasis on *homo significans* and the identification of Islamic society as a floating signifier in the realm of social fact as a corollary to revealed Islam itself. This provides space for critique as Muslim social scientists on Islam as socio-political fact.

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