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Toward a Post-Western IR: The *Umma*, *Khalsa Panth*, and Critical International Relations Theory

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Abstract

This article explores the possibilities of the emergence of a genuinely “post-Western,” and less Eurocentric, “critical” international relations (IR) theory through a brief examination of “critical” discourses within two “non-western” cosmopolitan traditions: Islam and Sikhism. It is argued that, although critical IR has created space for the articulation of post-western discourses within the discipline, it continues to speak *for* and *to* the West. A genuinely “post-western” critical IR would seek to go beyond mere *mimicry* of the “derivative discourses” of the modern West by identifying critical discourses on the political from *within* non-western traditions. First, “Islamist” discourses on the *Umma* which are simultaneously critical of the varying forms of “Kemalism” and “neo-fundamentalism” prevalent in the Islamic world will be briefly examined. Second, critical perspectives on Sikhism which critique the derivative “politics of homeland” and re-assert the sovereignty of the deterritorialized, transnational community of believers, the *Khalsa Panth*, will be considered. It is argued that, like the Muslim *Umma*, the *Khalsa Panth*, offers us an alternative conception of universality—and a potentially more “solidarist” conception of international society—than that offered by western Westphalian IR.

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