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POLITICAL ISLAM MOVEMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONS. THE CONCEPT AND THE PRACTICE

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*Political Islam Movements and International Relations:
The Concept and The Practice*

SAMI AL-KHAZENDAR

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Abstract

This study examines and analyzes the development of the relations between the Political Islam movements, on the one hand, and the foreign or regional and international environments, with the west in particular, on the other hand. In another words, it examines the concept and the practice of the Political Islam Movements and International Relations. It puts the movements' and the environments' visions, agendas and policies since the 1940s up till now into perspective.

The paper deals with many aspects such as, challenges to the efficiency of the Political Islam movements in the international arena, the attributes of the Political Islam, and the theoretical approach to International relation incorporated into the political Islam movements' framework.

This paper is confined to the study of the contemporary Political Islam movements, specifically the Sunni Arab one. This movement is mainly represented by the Muslim Brotherhood and its different partisan forms across the Arab world. It is also represented by those movements which dissented and severed any relations they once had with the Brotherhood despite the similar vision they share.

Keywords

Political Islam, Islam and International Relations, Muslim Brotherhood, Islam and Politics, Islamic Movements

Table of Contents

Introduction

Development of Relationship between Political Islam Movements and Foreign Environment

Challenges to the Efficiency of the Political Islam Movements in the International Arena

The Attributes of the Political Islam Movements' Relations with the Foreign Environment

The Theoretical Approach to International to International Relations Incorporated into the Political Islam Movements' Framework

Introduction

Upon the end of the Cold War and subsequent crystallization of a new world order, a chain of shifts and developments has initiated in the international arena. In light of these events and in the wake of 9/11 and its “War on Terror” aftermath, the phenomenon of Political Islam and its various movements, of all kinds and dimensions, have taken center stage. Such movements have since attracted the active attention of political forums and the national, regional, and international levels.

It is noteworthy that most of the studies tackling Political Islam have approached it from the Western and international powers’ perspectives towards Islam and this phenomenon’s movements. Scarce are the studies that enjoy spatio-temporal proximity to these movements, and approach them based on an independent vision of the global sphere and regional and international powers and their policies. As such, this study examines and analyzes the development of the relations between the Political Islam movements, on the one hand, and the regional and international environments, with the west in particular, on the other hand. It puts the movements’ and the environments’ visions, agendas and policies since the 1940s up till now into perspective.

This paper is confined to the study of the contemporary Political Islam movements, specifically the Sunni Arab one. This movement is mainly represented by the Muslim Brotherhood and its different partisan forms across the Arab world. It is also represented by those movements which dissented and severed any relations they once had with the Brotherhood despite the similar vision they share, such as the one headed by Hassan Al-Turabi in Sudan. The case study of the Sunni Arab movement has been selected for the following considerations: first, the Sunni Arab movement constitutes the mainstream of the Political Islam phenomenon in the Arab world; second, the movement has taken upon itself the integration into the political process and democratic procedures such as the municipal and parliamentary elections in several Arab states. It has also renounced violence as a method to achieve change; third, the movement departs from other Islamist movements’ extreme pacifism such as Sufism and Al-Tabligh movement. The latter movements refrain from taking part in the political career and democratic procedures and competing with the national, regional, and international political powers.

Although it will not obviate further objective scientific studies, the author aspires for this paper to contribute to those contemporary studies tackling the Political Islam phenomenon. The researcher views international relations and their status in addition to the development of their relationship with the Sunni Arab movements from the latter’s point of view and ethical perspective, not his own.

The Concept of the Political Islam Phenomenon and Movements

The definitions of “Political Islam” vary according to Western researchers and Arab and Muslim ones. They also vary according to the premises as well as political and intellectual orientation of the researcher addressing those definitions. As for this paper, it relies on the Political Islam phenomenon’s thinkers and icons’ definitions and writings for determining the concept of this phenomenon and the movements representing it; such thinkers include Rashed Al-Gannoushi, Abdulla Abu-‘Azza, Mahmoud Abu-Assa’oud, Hassan Al-Turabi, Abdul-Wahhab Al-Afandi, etc.

As for Rashed Al-Gannoushi, he defines it stating that “by the Islamic movement we mean the aggregate emitted activity motivated by Islam to achieve its objectives and constant revival for so as to control and direct reality constantly. This notion takes into account that Islam is for all time and place, which makes it imperative for its message to be revived in pursuant to the variation in time and place and development in science, knowledge and art. Accordingly, the Islamic movement’s objectives,

strategy and action methods will vary in correspondence to the time and place”¹ of their implementation.

On the other hand, Abdulla Abu-‘Azza defines it saying “by ‘Islamic movements’ we mean the collection of the different organizations associated with Islam; they function in the field of Islamic activism within a framework of a comprehensive vision of human life; they struggle to re-form the latter in conformance with Islamic instructions; they await the events of the Islamic peoples’ sweeping awakening both individually and collectively, through this Islamic perspective. They strive to influence every aspect of the social life so as to repair and reform it according to the Islamic principles.”² Mahmoud Abu-Assa’oud remarks that what is meant by “Islamic movements” is “the convergence of Muslim individuals in a commission that has its own governance system. Deep in their hearts, they believe in Islam, its practices, regulations and laws. They implement the Islamic teachings in their daily lives and within the limits of their power and perception... [They] draw on *Shari’a* (Islamic law) and their role model for the frameworks of their lives which they accomplish via ‘structures’ they found in accommodation of their needs and the developments in their surrounding environment.”³

Abdul-Wahhab Al-Afandi defines them as “the movements that are active in the political arena and advocate for implementing Islam and its laws in both the public and private lives... This term is often used to refer to movements that use this definition to describe themselves and are active in the political domain; for instance, this term is scarcely used to describe Sufi groups that are politically inactive and conventional parties with an Islamic background.”⁴ He adds, they are “those movements that believe in Islam’s comprehensiveness of all life aspects. They undertake leading what they see as necessary efforts to reaffirm this comprehensiveness amidst the encounter with the society’s flaccidity, leaders’ inadequacy, negative influences and adversaries’ machinations. In that, they ascribe to themselves the role of leading the society morally, challenging both conventional political and religious authority figures.”⁵

Those movements seek “changing the frame of reference in the public life to a framework where Islam and its various interpretations constitute a primary force in shaping life.”⁶ Islamic movements have distinguished themselves in three aspects: the first aspect is the forming of an organized group; the second is their comprehensive conception of Islam in all life aspects; the third is adopting peaceful action as an approach to achieving change in society.⁷

In light of the above, one can illustrate the essence of the Political Islam phenomenon or its movements through the interconnection of the following reflections and views:

1. Politics as both practice and thought is a central part or axis for this phenomenon; this is mainly because Islam as both “religion and state” is of a comprehensive nature of all life aspects. Hence, these movements take Islam for its ideological framework and what it includes of Islamic concepts and practices of politics with its variety.

¹ Rashed Al-Gannoushi, *The Islamic Movement and the Change Issue* (Arabic) (London: Al-Maghrebi Center for Studies and Translation, 2000), p11.

² Abdullah Abu ‘Azzah, “Towards a Scientific and Peaceful Islamic Movement” (Arabic), Abdullah Al-Nafesi (editor), *The Islamic Movement a Future Vision: Papers on Self Critique* (Arabic) (Cairo: Madbouly Library, 1989), p179.

³ Mahmoud Abu Al-Sa’woud, “The Problem of Meanings and Leaderships,” *Ibid*, p354.

⁴ Abdulwahhab Al-Afandi, “The Islamic Movement: The Establishment, Meaning, and Reality’s Complications” (Arabic), *The Islamic Movements and Their Impact on the Political Stability in the Arab World* (Arabic) (Abu Dhabi: Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2002), p13.

⁵ *Ibid*, p44.

⁶ Najeeb Al-Ghadban, *The Democratic Transformation and Islamic Challenge in the Arab World: 1980-2000* (Arabic) (Amman: Dar Al-Manar, 2002), p99.

⁷ For further details, see: *Ibid*, p100-101.

2. Politics is both means and end to the movements associated with the Political Islam phenomenon. The end is represented in the founding of the Guided (*Al-Rashid*) political regime in the Muslim societies. This, in its turn, will lead to their final purpose which is achieving an Islamic life system or the alternative Islamic project, which represents an impetus at the same time. Therefore, the dimensions of these movements' political theory are linked to "the two notions of governance and monotheism which together function as a regulator for political behavior... and this behavior involves the international and global behavior that should be founded on truisms, such as Islam's universalism and comprehensiveness and the exigency to spread peace and morals."⁸
3. Islam is a religion of action and interaction with life and a religion of conflict between good and evil (right and wrong). In this sense, these movements represent a movement for comprehensive reformative change and cooperative as well as conflictive mobilization for leading "the cultural Islamic project" in life. Therefore and from their perspective, Political Islam movements consider themselves as "reformative change movements" aiming at accomplishing this project.

In the same context, it is important to note that the different definitions of the methods for "change" and "the nature of understanding the cultural project" provided the source of variety and diversity in the phenomenon of the Political Islam's movements in the Arab world; there is a discord amongst the different movements concerning the politics, methods, instruments and phases of change. They also disagree on the priorities of this project and its essence, programs and implementation phases.

In sum, these movements consider themselves as comprehensive social reformative change movements drawing on Islamic authority as a source of ideology, policies, behavior, agendas and objectives. However, as a result of these variation in understanding the intentions and implementation methods of Islam, these movements are rendered diverse. Sometimes, they have had differences and even conflicts amongst each other.

The General Internal Characteristics of the Political Islam Movements

This section addressed some of the general characteristics and attributes of the Political Islam movements, specifically the Islamic Brotherhood as a case study. Despite the variations in the emergence of these characteristics from one organization to another across the different states, it is valid to consider the next attributes as common and shared amongst all of them. The disparities in these characteristics are attributed to the variation in local circumstances amidst which these movements operate. Another reason is the considerable variation in staff's competencies and backgrounds from one country to another.

The following is a summary of the most important characteristics shared by Political Islam movements across the different states:

1. The "radical" nature of understanding concepts and life system; meaning, they all aim at the radical change of the world's non-Islamic concepts and perspective that, among other life systems, have dominated the political and economic ones in the Arab world. Someone has expressed this in stating that these movements "aim at radical reform; meaning restructuring the social structure starting at its foundation to initiate a new cultural Islamic era...and I do not necessarily mean...using force to achieve change. Rather, I mean that the change is radical even if gradual or accomplished through peaceful means. After all, it is a change in the very nature of the state."⁹

⁸ Ahmad Al-Moselley, *The Encyclopedia of Islamic Movements in the Arab World, Iran, and Turkey* (Arabic) (Beirut: AlWehda A-Arabiyya Studies Center, 2004), p86-87.

⁹ Rashed Al-Ghannushi, Op.cit, p12-13.

In other words, it is a change that aspires to replace an alternative project based on Islamic propositions for the contemporary project founded on the Western and secular model. Moreover, the gradual manner of the change does not necessarily connote a difference in the means of change adopted by each of the projects, peaceful or democratic means of change form the primary framework of both projects.

2. The transition from struggling against power to coexisting with or sharing power: the observer of these movements' career notes that their perception of power has changed in several ways since the 1970s. It has shifted from a view of "struggle" over power to political "opposition" to it, or coexisting with and participating in it. An exception to this is what happened in Syria in late 1970s and early 1980s. However, a classic example of that is what is happening in Egypt, some of the Arab Gulf countries, Jordan, Morocco, Yemen and elsewhere.¹⁰ It is noted that these movements' political discourse and practices reaffirm the possibility of coexisting with power, or partnering with it in the general, especially the political, reform in the society. This progress compels us to note the movements' interest in participation through the official political channels and mechanism.
3. The merger between the dogmatic discourse and the pragmatic and realistic behavior (employing jurisprudence in behavior and implementing thought in reality); the focal axis of these movements' political discourse is the creedal content and the commitment to the essential principles concerning the primary public political issues and political authority. Despite this, their political discourse has taken on a pragmatic tone in regards to practice and behavior, especially since the 1990s until now. For example, many of the movements' branches have politically allied themselves to secular movements and parties, including the leftist and the socialist. For example, what happened in Egypt with the Labor Party and in Yemen in the coalition between the Yemeni Congregation for Reform and the ruling Popular Conference Party against the socialist parties, as well as in Jordan and Algeria. Probably, the only essential Arab political concern concerning which these movements have remained steadfast and clear in their stand and creedal view is the Palestinian cause and the peace with Israel matter. This integration between the creedal discourse and pragmatic behavior of the Political Islam phenomenon resulted in the developing of the political vision of these movements. It has also caused them to move significantly from the frame of generalities to defined programs and propositions.¹¹
4. the self development of the political Islam phenomenon; the interaction process between these movements' self-generated momentum, especially as a result of their ideological and organizational capabilities, and the domestic, Arab and international developments pushed them towards what could be called "self-development." "It is normal for a movement whose objective is change to develop and adopt a way of thought and method of behavior that correlate purpose and reality. The revival inside these movements has developed significantly along with the change in the national circumstances in each state and the renewal of the generations of political leaders and diversification in the adopted concepts. Also, the revival inside these movements has occurred in correspondence to the diversification in the conditions of the interaction between the revival and

¹⁰ For more information on the development of relations between these movements and political authority refer to: "The Vision of the Islamic Movement for Reform in Jordan" (Arabic), Islamic Action Front Party in Jordan (Amman: 25\2\2007); www.jabha.net/aslah.asp and Najeeb Al-Ghadban, Op.cit, chapters 3, 5 and 6.

¹¹ See for example the election platform of the candidates of the Islamic Action Front Party for the Jordanian 10th lower house elections, Nov 2007, Islamic Action Front Party publications 2007, election platform 2003, Islamic Action Front Party website, <http://www.jabha.net/body9.asp?field=LIB&id=1>, election platform 1989, Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood election platform 2005 on <http://www.islamonline.net/arabic/doc/draft-Ogreement/archives-01.shtml>.

foreign relation, which consist of these movements' relations with the ruling regimes, political parties and ideological movements."¹²

Certainly, the rate at which these movements self-develop varies according to the difference in the intensity and influence of the afore-mentioned elements. Nevertheless, it is important to point that the movements' self-development was driven by the national, regional and international conditions and developments as a reaction to them; It has not occurred in result of the availability of the initiative to take action or the capability to formulate initiatives concerned with creating the future and influencing its events.

5. The acclimation of the Political Islam phenomenon to country priorities; one notices the occurrence of a shift in this phenomenon's movements' interests from "the global Islamic concern" to national and country priorities. Nonetheless, they have maintained their political discourse's universalism and resumed its interaction with the Islamic and Arab nation's causes and concerns. This shift in interests, which started in the 1940s and continued until 1980s, is observed as a major development in the movements' rhetoric, such as their involvement in the Arab countries' independence and Afghanistan's during the Soviet occupation. This interest diminished in the 1990s, specifically post Second Gulf War after which they started to take national priorities in their charge. Examples of these priorities are the issues of political, economic and social reform, development and fighting financial and administrative corruption, giving attention to civil rights' issues, political participation and the local community's problems and concerns.

Development of Relationship between Political Islam Movements and Foreign Environment

This axis is concerned with the development of the relationship between the Political Islam movements and the regional and international settings since 1930s until early twenty first century. It is possible to divide this relationship's development into three main stages: first, the absence of a methodological view of international relations (1930s-1970s); second, the movement towards understanding and adopting the regional and international relations doctrine (late 1970s-early 1990s); third, leaning towards the establishing of a theory and strategic framework for international relations and attending and participating in the regional and international environments (early 1990s-early 21st century). These stages have been defined in light of the developments and consideration related to the two sides of the relationship.

First, the Stage of the Absence of Methodological View of International Relations

This phase started in the early 1930s and continued until the late 1970s upon the Islamic Revolution's break-out in Iran and the mother Islamic movement's return to the relatively open political work in Egypt. This return occurred after the movement was disbanded and most of its leaders arrested in the 1940s and 1950s. It lacked the methodological vision or theoretical framework for interacting with the external environment. It did not have the capacity or capability to take initiatives or adopt regionally and internationally influential policies. Instead, it and the other Islamic movements were reacting to these two environments.

In this stage, these movements expressed their approach to the international powers and external environment through a number of trends and directions, some of which are: first, resisting the occupation and European colonial powers that used occupied a large number of Arab states; second, they expressed their support for the Islamic movements that were oppressed in the states of the Islamic

¹² Mustafa Al-Felaly "Compiling Report: The Islamic Religious Awakening: Its Characteristics, Stages, and Future" (Arabic) Ismael Sabri Abdullah (et.al), *The Contemporary Islamic Movements in the Arab World* (Arabic), Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, 2nd ed, 1989, p362.

World; third, they were engrossed in resisting the Israeli occupation of Palestine and opposing all forms of international support for this occupation. This cause was considered to be one of the most influential developments of these movements' behavior and political positions towards the international powers in the international system at the time. Fourth, they interacted with and took interest in the conflicts and struggles concerning Muslim minorities in some of the countries in the world.

In this phase, the movements' conception and views of foreign and international policy were based on what its founder explains in this statement: "the external meaning of politics is maintaining the nation's independence and liberty and to make it feel its dignity and pride and steer it towards accomplishing the glorious goals that would give it [its deserved] place amongst other nations and respectable stature amongst peoples and states. It also means ridding it of others' hegemony and interference in its affairs, as well as defining its relationship with others in a way that ensures all its rights and directs all world countries towards public world peace, termed 'international law.' If this external meaning is what is meant by politics, then Islam has given a lot of attention to it and stated its opinion and regulations clearly in regard to it and committed all Muslims to abide by these rules in both peace and war... Islam determined and gave the Islamic nation's its sovereignty and dominion over nations... and then it necessitated for the nation to maintain this sovereignty."¹³

Kamil Al-Sharif, who is one of those who experienced this stage, explained that the Political Islam movements did not give "any notice to the international factor and barely [took] it into account, as if it did not exist, until they collide[d] with it. They found this factor present in the state's political and economic relations and exemplified in a secular strata dominating the governance and money sector and media that were, to a large extent, connected to external strings. This did not mean that "the secular" are a league of traitors or foreign agents; instead, they were people raised in a different doctrine and worked in national institutions interlinked with a homogenous world order. This global movement, with all its forms, was in adversity with Islamic though for various reasons related to ignorance, interests and inherited animosity, and there was no real effort exerted to rectify this image or mitigate this acrimony. I remember in interviews in which examples of such cases were discussed in the 1940s and 1960s; there was a lack of readiness to accept advisory or opposing opinions. Instead, such opinions were swiftly accused of westernization, dissension or treachery in behalf of the foreign."¹⁴

At the same time, he justified this shortcoming of the political Islam phenomenon in its approach to international action in that "the international conditions [were] stronger than the local movements. If a movement want[ed] to make use of those conditions, it did nothing except hurling itself in the middle of the international stream, which washed it into whichever direction it chose."¹⁵ All of this did not refute the presence of interest in the international dimension in this stage. However, this interest functioned within a framework of loose generalities and totalities and the framework of these movements' resistance to the occupation of Arab countries. It sprang from the truism that Islam is of a global nature and that it is a summon to all humanity.

One of the contemporary co-founders and participants in the Political Islam stream's development summarizes the relationship between it and the international dimension during this stage; he stated that it used to only "give regard to world issues of clear Islamic trait and any international conflict influencing Muslims' affairs. Maybe, its response to the international factor's development was in expressing support to the Islamic parties concerned in this development or denouncing the other party

¹³ The Collection of the *Letters by the Martyr Imam Hassan Al-Banna* (Arabic) (Alexandria: Dar Al-Da'wa Printing and Publishing, 1990), p315.

¹⁴ Kamal Al-Sharif, "Reflections on the Islamic Movements" (Arabic), Addustour Newspaper, 11th episode (Amman: 3/12/2000).

¹⁵ Ibid, 1st episode (27/7/ 2000).

involved. Instances of this approach were the Islamic national liberation issues...and the Islamic movements' concerns and *Jihad* (holy struggle) under the oppression of tyrant regimes...and the concern of Muslim's struggle for their distinct self-determination in the encounter with other sects (i.e. the situations in Palestine and Kashmir)... However, beyond that and for approximately twenty years since its inception, the movement remained involved in only the generalities of the international situation and distinguished only the Western and Eastern blocs so it, otherwise, leaned towards the global Islamic bloc instead. This bias was attributed to the loyalty and belonging to the Islamic nation, as if the movement was not aware of its international alliances' map or objectives in the world's destinies...There was no interest in or relations with other than clearly and directly Islam-related global phenomena. There was no study, policy, or practice of international relations. Instead, this movement used to terrorize states generally and spurn non-Muslim countries specifically. This was in implementation of the "disavowal of the infidels" concept in conducting relations; it was a complex of suspicion of diplomatic communications as performing a direct defilement or coming into contact with a malignant danger."¹⁶

In the context of these movements' defining of their priorities in this stage, the reality they lived imposed itself on these priorities. One icon of this stream, at the time, explains the development in the movements' priorities in pointing to "the division of the Umma's unity into state entities and its sufferance from Western occupation, which busied the Umma in struggling for liberation and independence. This brought the leading of this liberation effort against the occupation to the Islamic work's priority list. Leading the Umma in its liberation and Jihad against the colonizer in the different Muslim countries became their second priority after preserving the Umma's faith in its law (*Shari'a*) and in not separating the religion from politics. This rendered these movements and those Arab regimes with whom they allied themselves targets of persecution and oppression by the colonial and Zionist states."¹⁷

Generally, "because of the conditions of the resistance against colonization and striving to break away from the colonial culture and values, Islamists looked at global values and international institutions in suspicion and hostility since the beginning; sometimes, it was said that these values were distinct Western ones, and sometimes that the West had double standards."¹⁸ In this context and within the framework of its views and attitude towards international organizations in this stage, this movement clearly criticized and rejected UN resolutions in regard to the Palestinian cause.

What has been mentioned so far reaffirms that these movements' involvement in the international environment and interest in international forces was according to a shallow vision. This involvement did not take place in consequence of a systematic planning of action or participation in the international relation's shifts as related to the Arab region. Rather, it was a form of reaction or negative defence they were compelled to adopt as a response to some international powers' practices against Arab and Islamic states.

Second, Moving Towards and Employing Jurisprudence in Regional International Relations

This stage represents a transition towards the recognition of the importance of the international developments and attempting to take action towards the regional and international communities. This phase started in 1979, the year that witnessed the Islamic Revolution in Iran. It also created a new climate that influenced all Political Islam movements in terms of their policies and interaction patterns

¹⁶ Hassan Al-Turabi, *The Islamic Movement in Sudan: The Development, the Gain, and the Approach* (Arabic) (Al-Khurtoum: no publisher, 1989), p274-275.

¹⁷ Isaac Al-Farhan, *Political Stands and Opinions on Arab and Islamic National Issues* (Arabic), 2nd vol. (Amman: Dar Al-Furqan, 1998), p186.

¹⁸ Ridhwan Al-Sayyed, "The Future of the Islamic Movements under the Regional and International Changes" (Arabic) in *The Islamic Movements Their Impact on the Political Stability in the Arab World* (Arabic), previous reference, p184.

with the international environment. The Iraqi-Iranian war happened next. This stage witnessed the emergence of the Islamic Resistance Movement “*Hamas*” in Palestine in 1987 and ended with the end of the Gulf Crisis and Second Gulf war in 1990/1991. The Political Islam movements’ development and interaction at the international level in this stage was demonstrated through several means, some of which are the following.

The first means is the increase in the Arab and Muslim students’ presence in Europe, America and the socialist countries during the seventh and eighth decades of the 20th century. This translated in the founding of Islamic students’ associations and unions, which was facilitated through the liberties and democratic attitude in these countries. A large part of this student presence represented an international presence of the political Islam movements in these countries; it posed an opportunity for contact with these foreign environments and the capability to understand the Western political system. It also enabled movements to interact and deal with the forces influencing these societies. In light of those liberties, this student presence embarked on political action and openness and the forging of political cooperation relations and relations that are inviting and calling to Islam with these societies and their institutions.

After the return of the bigger part of those students to their countries in the Arab world, they had a leading role in managing and activating these movements with a vision that is open-minded and appreciative of the Western political experience and the nature of its political systems, models and functioning mechanisms. This leadership also reflected its appreciation of the space Arab and Islamic issues have occupied in the Western political career and the effect this Western political experience had on the Arab and Islamic world’s political life. In contrast, another part of these students settled in the West and stayed in direct contact with these movements in the Arab and Islamic world.

The second means is the expatriates’ connections and political relations in the Western environment; here, expatriates are those who left their Arab countries and settled in Europe and America, for many reasons. A number of those students either had already belonged to political Islam movements or came to join them in the West. In light of the available liberties in the exile, they could pursue oppositional political work. This type of activity required some sort of connections with the Western human rights, media and political figures and institutions in aim of clarifying the truth about some of the Arab regimes’ practices and pressuring them. In addition, part of this activism was dedicated to expressing support for some causes such as the ones in Palestine, Afghanistan, Kashmir and elsewhere. The increase in some of the expatriates’ economic capabilities rendered them the medium of the international political communication between these movements and the West.

One example of such characters was Yusuf Nada, the commissioner of the international political relations of the Islamic Brotherhood’s international movement that was based in Switzerland. According to his claims, Mr. Nada performed many international and regional roles and mediations, such as choreographing relations between the Islamic Brotherhood and the Iranian Revolution and mediating in the Iran-Iraq war in addition to other issues to which it will be referred later.

All of the above-mentioned factors of this phase led to “the reinforcement of the international dimension of these movements at this stage and the enhancement of its awareness and interest. This interest evolved into practical experience in communications and acquaintance and tangible projects in interaction and cooperation” with the West.¹⁹ Also, in the effort to mitigate the oppressive practices targeting these groups in some of the Arab countries, these factors led to a deeper understanding of the foreign relations’ formula with the West.

In this stage, specifically in the 1970s, these movements’ wide dispersion abroad facilitated their entering into a stage of political connection building and mediating efforts. One example is the Islamic Brotherhood’s international movement’s contact with the Iranian Revolution, before, during and after

¹⁹ Hassan Al-Turabi, *Op.cit*, p276.

the revolution. The Brotherhood provided external support and encouragement, attempted to establish early political relations with the revolution, mobilized Islamic figures to offer foreign political support and expressed endorsement of the revolution early on. This support reflected the high Islamic hopes for the Iranian Revolution and their faith in the latter's capability to represent the starting point of establishing an Islamic state in the region.

However, those political estimates lacked accuracy and the movement's political betting on the Revolution turned out lacking in soundness. This was especially clear given the Iran-Iraq war's escalation, the internal struggle witnessed by Syria at the time and the subsequent Iranian constitution's direction towards a Shi'ite sectarian orientation. This political contact initiated by the Brotherhood demonstrated its desire to forge political ties with Iran. Initially, the Iranian side responded to this initiative favorably and welcomingly, trying, on the one hand, to invest in the popular base this support represented and, on the other hand, to bestow an Islamic international popular legitimacy upon this revolution.

In this stage too, these movements practiced mediation and negotiation as a third party. For instance, they participated in the attempt to amend relations between the Iranian government and the Sunni Kurds in Iran. This mediation took the shape of an individual initiative proposed by Yusuf Nada with the approval of the entity he represented (the Brotherhood). This initiative included Mr. Nada's communicating with the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Domenico Jean Picot, to end the war. The latter played a major role in that direction.²⁰

The third factor was the Afghani affair and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan; this issue was considered to be one of the central concerns of these Islamic movements in the eighties, as it is an Islamic cause involving the colonization of a Muslim people and country. The movements made available all sorts of political, economic, financial, logistic and press support to assist it. This particular issue was interlinked with certain Arabic, Islamic and international dimensions and connected to the conditions of the Cold War; this rendered the Islamic movements' involvement in this issue a reason for their indirect implication in the Cold War dynamics. This involvement created a kind of correlation between the movements' international policies and the American policy towards their common enemy, the Soviet Union and communist ideology. This position gave the Political Islam phenomenon international facilitations offered by some of the conservative and anti-communist Arab and Islamic states. This positive regional and international climate that was supportive of these movements' role in this case resulted in the increase of attention they received; it also caused for some of the regional and international powers to become receptive to these movements.

The Afghani case, at the time, demonstrated the capability of the political Islam movements to coexist and cooperate with the West. It also showed that these movements were less hostile and more biased towards the Western liberal ideology than they were towards communism. In addition, it demonstrated their predisposition to conduct pragmatic international work when public interests were involved. Public interests motivated these movements to find a way to coexist with the West despite the fundamental contradictions between the two sides' ideologies and attitudes towards the Palestinian cause.

Generally, the 1980s period of this stage reflected a noted development in the Islamists' understanding and comprehension of regional and international relations and their complexities. As a result, this stage witnessed a significant detraction in the movements' "international conspiracy theory" propositions. There was also a disappearance of any references to their perceptions of *Jaahiliyya* (the era of ignorance of divine guidance preceding Islam) and the international Jewish and Western conspiracy against Islam in the 1980s.

²⁰ For more information see the interview with Yousef Nada on Al-Jazeera channel. "Witness to Time" program, 2nd episode (11/8/2002). <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/BFC52150-5FCA-48F3-8E15-7080405A64c.htm> and the 4th episode (25/8/2002). <http://www.aljazeera.net/programs/century-witness/articals/2002/818-28-htm..1>

However, this did not influence their conviction of the necessity of the struggle against the West and undermining its hegemony over our societies and causing a separation from its culture and politics.”²¹ While these movements did not disregard the international powers’ importance and influence, they moved away from the impulsive “conspiratorial” interpretation of those powers’ capability to control events and produce all of the shifts taking place in the Arab and Islamic states at the time. In general, the international activity of these movements in the 1980s took two forms; they were either in the form of individual initiatives or formal collective delegations. Most of these efforts were reactions towards certain regional developments and conditions.

Third, the Movement towards International Relations Theory and Discipline and Participation in the Regional and International Environments

This phase started with the emergence of a group of cornerstone regional and international developments and events, such as the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the beginning of the Second Gulf War, the emergence of the new unipolar international system and the salience of American hegemony. As for the Palestinian cause and Political Islam movements, Hamas emerged as a key variable in the complications of this issue.²² Finally, this phase witnessed the events of Sept 11, 2001 and, most recently, the war on Iraq.

As a result of regional and international shifts witnessed by these movements in the first and second stages, they realized their need to formulate their vision of their regional and international political mobility. This caused them, or some of their members, to found a methodological framework and intellectual system for approaching the international reality. They were motivated to move towards the construction of a theory and policy for international relations and a modality through which they can pursue political activity at the international level as a main participant and not only in reaction to events. This caused to enhance their “presence” in the international powers’ political calculations. Another factor that enhanced this development and interest in the political Islam phenomenon is the discussion in the West revolving around the impending “danger of Islam” as a substitute enemy for the Soviet Union. Also, these developments led these movements towards both negative and positive interaction with the variables of international politics. They also resulted in the increase in ideological and intellectual regard paid by these movements and states in the West and the Arab and Islamic World to the issues “Islam and the West” and “Clash of Civilization.”

This phase started with the Iraqi invasion of the state of Kuwait in 1990; the resulting international dynamics and interest in the Arab region compelled and motivated these movements to assert their role and presence in this context. They held themselves to be directly concerned with this context as political movements with a civilized and religious message. From here, they tried to find for themselves a role within the regional political communications. They mobilized at both the regional and international levels in a qualitative move, for movements from across states such as Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Tunisia, Sudan and Palestine formed an Islamic delegation to mediate between Arab states in order to resolve the Gulf crisis.²³ In September 1990, this delegation visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran and Jordan to convene with the state’s presidents and kings and important figures including Kuwaiti officials residing in Saudi Arabia. At the end of its tour in October, the delegation

²¹ Ridwaan Al-Sayyed, “The Political Islamic Movements and the Struggle over Power in the Arab World” (Arabic), *Al-Nadwa Magazine*, 6th vol., 3rd issue, (Amman: July 1995), p10.

²² Despite that Hamas was established in December 1987, its political speech and role in foreign politics was limited. Some say the role started in the early 1990’s as Hamas appointed first official spokesperson outside Palestine. In addition, some political leaders become public in a number of Arab countries. Hamas’s first official participation was as a mediator in the Gulf war crisis within the Arab Muslim organizations delegation. For more information see Khalid Al-Hroob, *Hamas: The Thought and The Political Practice* (Arabic) (Beirut: Palestinian Studies, 1996), p.162.

²³ Delegation members included: Mohammed Abdulrahman Khalifa, Hassan Al-Turabi, Rashed Al-Ghannoushi and Ibrahim Ghosha.

held a press conference in Amman to address the issues with which the tour was concerned and its visits' and mediation efforts' outcomes. The press release discussed a number of concerns that reflected the delegation's perspective on these international events and developments and on how to resolve the regional conflicts.²⁴

These movements resumed their efforts through sending a small mediation delegation to each of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iraq. The delegation transferred messages between the concerned parties to assist in enhancing the prospects of the Islamic Arab resolution.²⁵ As well, they continued their efforts in the conference held by these movements' representatives and delegates over the period extending from January 15 to February 7, 1991.²⁶

Some remarks and characteristics concerning the role these movements played amidst the Gulf Crisis are worth highlighting; the movements' political stance towards the Gulf Crisis was, generally, considered as one of "principle" that corresponded to their traditions and intellectual propositions. This stance was also considered a matter of the Islamic nation's public interest. The circle of the Umma's interests superseded that of the individual "countries'" interests in size and importance. Simultaneously, they held this "dogmatic" stance to be their political opening out of the local and regional complications and dimensions of this international crisis in the Arab World on both the popular and official levels. According to their views, their position resonated with, on the one hand, the majority of the Arab and Islamic popular attitude. On the other hand, it agreed with most of the attitudes of the parties of this crisis in the Arab arena, except the circle of the Arab Gulf states who disagreed with these propositions.

In contrast, this stance fell into discord with the official position taken by most Arab governments, which led to a conflict in interests and differences with these political regimes. The Islamic movement's political discourse during the Gulf crisis reflected its vision and diagnosis of the defective forces that led to crises and conflicts in the Arab region. It, the discourse, attributed the latter to a number of factors, some of which are:²⁷

1. the crisis of the ruling political elite represented in the problem of the political despotism exercised by some of the Arab regimes.
2. the legitimacy crisis; the Brotherhood dealt with this crisis within the framework of their civilized perspective, excluding political regimes from the Islamic legitimacy.
3. the subservience predicament; Islamic movements expressed their accusation of Arab regimes of being both biased and subservient to America.
4. Western conspiracy and interests; the discourse referred to and highlighted the contingency of colonial Western Zionist conspiracy and project to dominate the Middle East region and plunder its resources and wealth.

On the other hand, the political position and discourse adopted by these movements expressed an attempt at "influence and action" and "presence" in the regional and international powers' interactions in this crisis's events. This was translated in the following forms: raising popular awareness of this crisis's dimensions and risks; public mobilization in its various forms to pressure the Arab government

²⁴ Khalid Al-Hroob, "The World Islamic Conference on the Gulf Crisis" (Arabic), *Muslim Palestine Magazine* (Arabic) (London: November 1990), p15. For more information see Tariq Al-Bashri (introduction) *The Nation's Report in a Year* (Arabic), "The Islamic Brotherhood and the Gulf Crisis" (Arabic), (Cairo: Ummah Press and Arab Counselors, 1991), p212-226.

²⁵ Khalid Al-Hroob, *Hamas: The Thought and the Political Practice* (Arabic), Op.cit, p15.

²⁶ For more information about this meeting read "The Second Bulletin of the Islamic Movements on the Gulf War: 17/2/1991" (Arabic), *Muslim Palestine Magazine* (London: March 1991), p19.

²⁷ For more details see *The Nation's Report in a Year* (Arabic), "The Islamic Brotherhood and the Gulf Crisis" (Arabic), previous reference, p223-224.

participants in the alliance; communicating with the senior political officials and figures in the member states of the conflict; mediation attempts and political initiative in aim of resolving the crisis peacefully, performing a wide regional media mobility; and calling for economic boycott of the United States of America in specific.

Despite all of this, the “influence and action” mobility failed to affect a change in the international affairs’ happenings and their outcome. Although, the afore-mentioned forms of “action” clearly created apprehension and a climate of political instability suffered by the regional actors.

As for these movements’ role post-Gulf Crisis, they performed different political roles and communications in the official regional arena. They performed the role of the mediator in attempts to resolve conflicts amongst some of the Arab and Islamic states, according to Yusuf Nada. For instance, they mediated between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran in order to resolve the Iranian pilgrims’ crisis in 1987 and between the KSA and Yemen regarding the tensions arising between them in 1994. They also offered Yemen assistance in its conflict with Ethiopia over the Hanish Islands.²⁸ There were many other roles and mediations, such as Hassan Al-Turabi’s efforts in mediating between the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Hamas during 1993 concerning the latter’s joining of the Organization and its recognition of the PLO’s legitimacy as the Palestinian people’s sole representative.²⁹ He also mediated between them in 1995 regarding the relations between Hamas and the Palestinian National Authority.

It can be inferred, from all of the above, that the Political Islam movements’ role during this phase revolved around the regional arena and concerns rather than the international ones. As well, their activities expanded in this stage to include not only civil and popular action in the Islamic World but also action and participation at the official or governmental level.

The Hamas Movement and International Mobility in this Phase

It is imperative to examine the emergence of Hamas’s role as part of the Political Islam phenomenon during this stage. It is also notable the extent by which this movement, Hamas, exceeded most similar movements in the international and regional relations’ field in terms of its participation and involvement as an actor in these two arenas, regardless of this role’s advantages and disadvantages. It is doubtless that this movement’s inexorable connection to the Palestinian cause, which has regional as well as international dimensions, caused it to enter into the external scene earlier than its peers did. It also succeeded in being a main actor in the Palestinian issue’s equation, even ahead of its victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections and formation of the Palestinian government in 2006.

The role of Hamas at the international level is dated back to the incident of the expulsion of 400 Palestinians to the Lebanese borders in late 1992 at the hands of the Israeli occupiers. Most of the expelled were political, religious and social figures in Hamas.³⁰ This incident is considered to be the first step of the movement’s success in lifting the regional and international media and political siege off itself. It also offered it a chance to interact with states and international media and political commissions and become the center of international and regional attention, both at the popular and official levels. Doubtless, the political and media orientation of the discourse and approach of the expelled, their employment of the international law and international legitimacy rhetoric and

²⁸ For more details check Yousef Nada's interview with Al-Jazeera, previous reference, 3rd episode (18/8/2002). <http://www.alzazeera.net/programs/century-witness/articles/2002/8/18-20-htm.1>, 5th episode (1/9/2002). <http://www.aljazwwra.net/programs/century-witness/articles/2002/9/0-5-htm.1>

²⁹ For more information on the negotiations see Khalid Al-Hroob, *Hamas: The Thought and the Political Practice* (Arabic), Op.cit, p102, 121, 132.

³⁰ For more information on the expulsion incident refer to: Ibid, p210, 215.

utilization of the discrepancy between the expulsion process and international law and norms contributed significantly to their success in taking advantage of this event.

This experience led to the crystallization of relatively progressive foreign policies and vision for the movement, compared to similar Political Islam movements. In its study “*Hamas’s Phasal Policies in Political Relations*,” released in 1996, the movement defines its general policies in the international field in this stage. These policies included:³¹

5. communicating with the various international actors regardless of their political and ideological backgrounds and in accordance with what serves best the Palestinian people’s interests.
6. ensuring the establishment of contact and relations with the international actors and obtainment of their support and sympathy does not conflict with the movement’s commitment to its principles.
7. the movement is not a part of any conflict with any international actor and does not condone the assaultment or assault against states’ different interests and property.
8. the welcoming of all international efforts exerted in ending occupation and lifting its injustice and tyranny off the Palestinian people.
9. protesting resolutions that undermine the Palestinian people’s rights without antagonizing the international institution at all.
10. the focus in its communications and relations on the influential states in the international arena and ensuring that this does not result in alienating less influential or important parties.

In its proposition of such policies, at the time, the movement succeeded in presenting both clear “vision and strategic policies” in terms of generalities rather than specificities. It also reflected a more sophisticated understanding of the international relations’ formula despite the controversy and anomalies between its vision and its practice of international political action. It also opened channels of international communications with Western countries and most of the five permanent U.N. Security Council members’ ambassadors, attempting to explain its objectives and policies and influencing powerful states’ policies.³² Therefore, the movement’s perspective and international approach did not essentialize the “West” or lump it into one monolithic entity; instead, it distinguished between the European attitudes and the American attitudes towards it and the Palestinian cause, as well as between the American administration and the American people and did not sever communications with the former.

As well, it tried to influence the European attitude so as to maintain and enhance its separation and distinction from the American one, which was illustrated in its bulletins and officials’ statements.³³ There were a lot of European communications with Hamas, especially in 2003, which aimed at persuading the movement to change its positions and renew the truce it had with Israel. Commenting on this, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin remarked in this context that “there were communications with the Europeans in order to renew the truce with Israel but Hamas rejected this.”³⁴ Nonetheless, these

³¹ Ibid, p212.

³² For more information see: Ibid, p214-220.

³³ A statement in a letter by Hamas leaders protesting George W. Bush’s calls on the European Union to designate Hamas as a ‘terrorist’ group. They praised the European stand, especially the French one, of refusing this demand. *Addustour Newspaper* (Amman: 30/6/2003). An official statement issued by Hamas, in June 2003, addressed this issue. For more information on the European vs. the American stands refer to: “The Reasons of the European Threat to Hamas” (Arabic), *Muslim Palestine Magazine* (London: July 2003), p11.

³⁴ An interview with Ahmad Yaseen on *Al-Arabiya* satellite channel (7/9/2003). He pointed out in this interview that the communications had taken place shortly before the European Foreign Ministers put Hamas’s political wing on the terrorist list.

communications resumed before and after Hamas was entered into the list of designated terrorist organizations in September 2003.³⁵

Since the expulsion accident, and until before entering into the Palestinian Authority in 2006, Hamas has succeeded in accomplishing a quantum leap in the Islamic movement's involvement in the field of international political action. This leap represented a shift in the movement's international connections, attendance and participation. Also, the movement became a main actor in the regional and international political actions towards the region.

Even after it had entered the Palestinian Authority in 2006, Hamas resumes its communications with some of the Europeans, albeit in a covert manner. The movement and its government came to participate in many Islamic and Arab official meetings in third world countries. In addition, the Mecca Agreement between Hamas and Fatah became an essential topic of regional and international discussions. As well, the Russian initiative to receive Hamas officials and hold talks with the movement at the Russian foreign minister level reflected both sides' desires to reinforce connections amongst themselves.³⁶

In the statement of the first Palestinian government, which Hamas had formed, it expressed the orientation of its attitudes in the foreign policy and its perspective on the international institutions. Such attitudes were based on moving towards more involvement in and openness on the Arab and Islamic regional surroundings and the international community along with all of its institutions and international forces. They also emphasized the necessity of dialogue with this external environment and the rejection of all forms of political, intellectual, or cultural self-inflicted seclusion. Ismael Hanyyeh confirms this when asserting "the government's assiduity in establishing healthy and strong relations with the various world countries as well as with the international institutions, including the United Nations and Security Council...according to what facilitates peace and world stability...We are engaged in a solid and strong relationship with the European Union, although we expect from it to reconsider some of its followed policies regarding the conflict in the region...We also demand from the international community, specifically the Quartet Committee, to incline in favor of the justice and equality values for accomplishing just and comprehensive peace in the region...We appreciate Russia's stand as a member of the Quartet Committee who chose the path of dialogue, as well...and I express the government's readiness for dialogue with the Quartet Committee and for searching for all means to end the state of conflict and reinforce calm in the region."³⁷

Moreover, in the National Unity Government's statement in 2007, Ismael Haneyyeh highlighted his government's diligence in "committing to the activation of its role in each of the League of Arab States and the Islamic Conference Organization...It is proud of the various international ties that have been deepened through the international support for our people and legitimate right. The state will work on forging healthy and strong relationships with the various countries of the world and international institutions including the United Nations and Security Council and international and regional organizations...Also, the government reasserts...its respect of international law and humanitarian law in accordance with our inveterate values, norms, traditions...The government is diligent in having solid relations with the European Union and each of the Federation of Russia, People's Republic of China, Japan, India and the Latin America states...The government will also ensure of the developing of the relationship with the permanent members of the Security Council. Moreover, the government calls for the American Administration to urgently reconsider its position on

³⁵ Refer to Musa Abu-Marzooq's, member of Hamas's Political Bureau, interview with *Al-Sabeel Newspaper*, issue no. 543 (Amman: 1-7/6/2004).

³⁶ Refer to both sides' comments on the negotiations in "Hamas's Delegation in Moscow Today, Abu-Marzooq: Within Russia's Capabilities to Correct Washington's Mistakes in the Region" (Arabic), also "Al-Quds's Talk: Historical Talks in Moscow" (Arabic), *Al-Quds Newspaper*, issue no 13471 (Rammallah: 19/2/2007).

³⁷ "Haniyyeh: [We Are] Ready to Talk With the Quartet Committee about Ending Conflict and Reinforcing Calm in the Region" (Arabic), *Ibid*.

the Palestinian issue and respect the Palestinian people's choice represented by the National Unity Government."³⁸

Through both of its two governments' terms and until it was resigned by the Palestinian President Mahmoud 'Abbas in 2007, the Hamas movement became the center of the attention of the regional and international communications and policies towards the region; although, it did not succeed in achieving effective results or practical infiltration of the international relations. Clearly, it failed in translating its theoretical vision of international relations into successful practices in reality; the international forces still see there is a wide gap between their needs and requirements in the international community and the movement's propositions and policies. In contrast, it is doubtless that Hamas's experience in the field of international relations is predicted to contribute to the maturation of the vision of the Islamic movement in general and its policies and approach towards international relations; It is also expected to contribute to the development of the movement's awareness of the nature of the challenges it is possible to confront in the international action field.

The Events of 9/11 and the Political Islam Phenomenon

The Political Islam phenomenon is a different study subject from the "Bin Ladin" phenomenon in terms of resorting to militant violence against the ruling Arab regimes as a means to change. As for the former, it took no direct part in the militant conflict with the United States of America. However, it can be contended that the September 11 events created "consideration tension" and polarization between the Political Islam movement, on the one hand, and the U.S and Western powers, on the other; they enhanced the political, cultural and, perhaps, civilizational "gap" and "enmity" between the two parties. At the same time, these events resulted in the plunging of these movements with all their parties and visions as an often targeted player in the dynamics of international politics. They granted the movements access into the scene of action and direct friction in the regional and international politics, although this presence in the international scene was mostly defensive. This position motivated movements to contemplate a more strategic vision and perspective towards the international interactions.

The Political Islam Movements' Position on the New International System and International Organizations

Since the end of the Cold War and with the emergence of the New World Order and then after the September 11 events, these movements' political discourse have come to contain rhetoric that is rich in contemporary international terminology; such terms include international legitimacy, international and regional organizations, the United Nations, international terrorism, state terrorism, the Security Council, international or world system, international cooperation, international law, clash of civilizations, humanitarian cooperation, world security and peace, secularism, the International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, and other contemporary terms of international politics.³⁹ The use of such terminology in the movement's discourse represents a form of the movement's interaction with the international environment, community, and politics. It also reflected the movement's rejection of the state of "alienation" from the discourse and terms of this age.

³⁸ "The Prime Minister's Speech to the Legislative Council to Gain the Confidence Motion for his Government" (Arabic), *Al-Quds Newspaper*, issue no. 13498 (Rammalla: 18/3/2007).

³⁹ See Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood's election platform 2005, Op.cit, and a letter from the Muslim Brotherhood's supreme guide to the American president George W. Bush, 10/10/2001; Islam on line .net, <http://www.islamonline.net/arabic/doc/2001/10/artical4.shtml>. The Public policies of The Islamic Action Front Party in Jordan approved by the party's first general conference on 28//2/2001; <http://www.islamonline.net/arabicc/doc/2001/10/artical4shtml>. And the document "The Vision of the Islamic Movement For Reform in Jordan" (Arabic), (Amman: 25/2/2007), Op.cit.

As for the United Nations Organization, the movements have criticized its policies and many of its resolutions and accused it of being inadequate and impotent and of employing double-standards when addressing the Arab issues, especially the Arab-Israeli conflict and the sanctions on Iraq during the 1990s. Despite such accusations, the movements have condoned work and cooperation with U.N. in principal, but only according to a vision founded on the organization's autonomy, especially from American hegemony, and treating its shortcomings. They have also expressed "pragmatic" perspectives, visions and policies that, to a certain extent, intersect with the interests of Islamic and Arab causes. For instance, one of Hamas leaders expressed the movement's policies towards the U.N. in his statement "we approve of any Arab, Islamic or international resolution that consists with our rights and constants and at the same time reject any decisions that contradict with them. Thus, we neither accept these decisions in entirety nor reject them."⁴⁰

On the other hand, the Islamic Action Front Party in Jordan, in its first general conference in the end of 2001, defined its perspective on the negative UN reality and how to escape it in the following statement: "the imbalances and distortions the U.N. have suffered, especially in the last two decades, necessitates the adoption of a strategy that promotes the autonomy of the U.N. and its committees and organizations. The strategy should also aim at freeing it from some of the powerful states' hegemony over it and put an end to the right of veto that is monopolized by some states, which reinforces their dictatorship and tyranny."⁴¹

Despite their reservations concerning the performance of the U.N., these movements' vision advocates for positive interaction with the international and regional organizations. This is especially illustrated in their call in Jordan for "the necessity to exercise a policy of political and economic openness world-wide and participate in the membership of the various international and regional organizations which achieve humanity's interests and the best interests of the Arab nation and Jordanian people."⁴²

It is useful to note here these movements' approach to some of the international organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), for example, as one of the standing international system's institutions. Since its inception in 1949 and until the conclusion of the Cold War or the mid nineties, these movements did not express any interest in this international organization; their approach to it was almost absent, although it was characterized by mistrust and negativity towards the organization's attitude as under USA hegemony, as was the NATO's approach towards the movements.

The NATO's interest in the Political Islam movements emerged later as a result of international developments that involved the end of the Cold War and the consequent strategic shift in the NATO's role, program and missions. They also involved the emergence of the international violence phenomenon, or terrorism, in some member states of the organization. The first indications of this interest in the Political Islam phenomenon were the organization's Secretary-General's statements in 1995 referring to the "new Islamic threat," which was a negative and aggressive beginning.* Despite this attitude, the organization's role in Kosovo was not subject to these movements' criticism. The NATO's role in the Islamic World developed later to include field work such as its role in Afghanistan. It also proposed, on more than a single occasion, its peace keeping forces' participation in each of Iraq, South Lebanon and Darfour. It is doubtless that this expansion in its role will entail the

⁴⁰ "An interview with Mohammad Nazzal, member of Hamas's Political Bureau" (Arabic), *The Society Magazine* (Arabic), issue no 1043, (Kuwait: 23/3/1993), p30-31.

⁴¹ The Public Policies of the Islamic Action Front Party, Op.cit.

⁴² Document "The Vision of the Islamic Movement For Reform in Jordan" (Arabic), Op.cit. Refer to 7:15.

* Please see: The New York Times, "Seeing Green;The Red Menace Is Gone. But Here's Islam", op.cit. The New York Times, "Uneasy Crossroads -- A special report.; Discontent Seethes in Once-Stable Turkey", op.cit.

emergence of a deeper and more understanding approach to relations between it and Islamic movements, relations that are reliable to assume a negative or hostile pattern otherwise.

As in regard to these movements' visions and attitudes on the American policies in the post-Cold War era (the stage of the unipolar international system), they reflected more condemnation and disapproval than during the Cold War period. Such attitudes were most condemning after September 11 and the consequent American invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, Iraq's occupation in 2003, the continued support for Israel including in the latter's war with Lebanon in 2006, the U.S. siege over the Palestinian government in the same year, the boycotting of the Palestinian National Unity Government in Mars 2007 and other issues that reinforced and enhanced the former perspective and attitude. Thus, these movements undertook to call for counteracting this policy in the region and resisting it and accused it of "aggression, colonialism, violation of states' sovereignty" and interference in the Arab and Islamic countries' affairs. Moreover, these movements presented their own vision of the U.S. objectives in the Arab region in the period following September 11 and Iraq's occupation.⁴³

Nevertheless, one report contends that despite its attitudes and policies towards the American politics, everybody knows that these movements did not take any direct action against the United States of America or its project or interests. This rejection of U.S. policy still complies with the peaceful democratic practice from the Western point of view. It is thought to be unlikely for the movements to take any action that might pose a direct and clear threat to the American interests inside or outside the region.⁴⁴

Generally, these movements' ethics' framework reflects or expresses their views of the New World Order which partially intersect with the official view of some of the political regimes in the Arab World and political orientations of the secular Arab movements. Such perspectives, in brief, address the following: the double-standards of the international Western politics in general and the American one in particular, the double-standards that seem to even afflict the U.N. institutions in their approach to the region's conflicts; U.S. hegemony over world politics, in general, and Arab policies, in specific, and its attempt to impose its positions and objectives by all means including military ones; the absence of the factors of international balance and effective international pluralism; the fragility and failing of the international organizations in resisting the American project in most instances and the acquiescence of these organizations, especially the U.N., the World Bank, World Trade Organization and NATO, and their transformation into mere tools in American politics and the international order; the violation of states' legitimacy and autonomy in the name of humanitarian slogans, such as human rights, international security and peace maintaining and the war on terror; protecting Israel and maintaining its security.⁴⁵

⁴³ Statement issued by The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood on Riyadh bombings 14/5/2003, Islamonline.net website, <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabici/doc/2003/05/artical08.SHTML>. "On the Offensive Aggression on Iraq" on 20/3/2003 check Islamonline.net website: <http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/doc/2003/04articals02.SHTML>. Also refer to Niveen Mes'ad and Abdul'atty Ahmad, *The Foreign Policy of the Islamic Movements* (Arabic), (Cairo: Political Studies Center, University of Cairo, 2000), p20. And the document titled "The Vision of the Islamic Movement for Reform in Jordan" (Arabic), previous reference.

⁴⁴ "Is it Time for American Targeting of The Islamic Brotherhood Movement?" (Arabic), *The Political File* (Arabic), issue no. 9 (Leeds, Britain: Political View Studies Center), September 2003. p20-21).

⁴⁵ Refer to the following: Ahmad Yousef, *The Future of the Islamic Work in Light of the Transformations and the Gulf Crisis* (Arabic), (Chicago: United Organization for Studies and Research, 1991), p143, 486, 847, and "the interview with Mohammad Nazzal, member of Hamas's Political Bureau" (Arabic), Op.cit. Also the Public Policies of the Islamic Action Front Party, Op.cit. The document titled "The Vision of the Islamic Movement for Reform in Jordan" (Arabic), Op.cit.

Challenges to the Efficiency of the Political Islam Movements in the International Arena

Despite the progress in the Political Islam movements' vision, role and participation at the regional and international levels, especially in the 1990s stage and early 21st century, there is a clear weakness and limitation to their effectiveness and influence on the regional and international decision-making and dynamics in regard to the region. This fact is attributed to a group of obstacles and challenges one can explain as follows:

First: the most important obstacles at the domestic (i.e. internal) level:

1. the restriction in "exercise" and "experience" and the availability of international political relations' experts at these movements: one of latter's figures remarks on their leadership's extreme lacking in scientific specialties that would enable them to reveal the factors of the international change equation, such as history, economics, sociology and international relations.⁴⁶ This lack rendered its reading of the international relations "not sanctioned by scientific readings in power relations and people's disposition. A serious reading of the power relations between our nation and its adversaries reveals an exorbitant imbalance in favor of the latter. However, the balance of power is ever moving and it is shifting towards major changes in favor of our nation."⁴⁷ In this context, one notes the scarcity of character possessing international leadership potential. Such figures display capacity, skills, clear strategic political and intellectual vision, tools of communication with the other and contemporary political discourse. They are also charismatic so as to be able to impose interest and presence upon the international arena in general and the Western in particular.
2. the weakness and "alienation" of the Islamic political discourse towards the international environment: until the mid nineties of the twentieth century, this discourse was generally characterized by its distance from the language of international politics and contemporary terminology. Examples of such rhetoric are human rights, international legitimacy, secularism, international law and international organizations. Nonetheless, it developed radically afterwards.
3. the limitation in the availability of institutions and apparatus necessary for international action to these movements. For instance, they are lacking in political research centers, and those that address international affairs (i.e. political, economic and press affairs), public relations institutions and data banks and international press. Although they have recently taken interest in founding some of these institutions, their role is still limited. The movements' establishment of such institutions reflects their need for these tools to facilitate its international mobility and presence and in light of the international politics' influence over it. However, these movements still complain about the lack of tools and channels through which it interacts with the other.

Second: the most important obstacles and challenges at the regional and international levels:

1. the cultural historic legacy of international and Western fear and aggression, especially, towards the Political Islam phenomenon; there is a history and legacy of hostility between the Western international powers dominating the region and Islam, whether during the period of resistance against colonialism in the Arab states during the twentieth century or in the post-Cold War era. The West, in general, is alarmed by "the latent capacity the Islamists have to undermine the Israeli-Arab peace process and the stability of the pro-Western Arab regimes. [They are also capable of] obstructing the West's path to reaching the oil resources in the Gulf, employing untraditional weaponry and exercising terrorist acts; cultural conceptions might have, unconsciously, affected the U.S. thinking about political Islam."⁴⁸ It is not doubted that the events

⁴⁶ Rashed Al-Gannoushi, Op.cit, p99.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Fawaz Jarjas, *America and Political Islam: Clash of Civilizations or Clash of Interests?* (Arabic), Translation Ghassan Ghuson (Beirut: Dar Al-Nahar Publishing House, 1998, p238.

of the Gulf crisis and war 1991/1992, September 11, 2001 and the war on Iraq in 2003 all widened this gap separating these movements from the West. They also exasperated the crisis of trust and mutual suspicions between the two parties, which motivated the Western powers to try sanction the movements' role and influence.

2. the limitations in the capacities and required institutions for the Political Islam phenomenon to influence and act at the international level, compared to those owned by its opposing forces in the fields of politics, economics, military, media and technologies: this disparity enabled those powers and forces to curb the phenomenon's role and influence in the international arena.
3. the international support for most of the Arab political regimes in their encounter against the Islamic opposition in its different forms. in this context, Kamil Al-Sharif, a moderate Islamic thinker, explains that "if haste and misjudgment drives any Islamic movement so as to put the ruler, any ruler, to in front of an embarrassing choice, either antagonize foreign states and institutions or strike the movement, the latter option is the easier and more probable one. This is because the Islamic movement is never lamented by anyone and does not enter into human rights organizations' field of interest."⁴⁹ It follows that these regimes have extremely contributed, in its collaboration with the most powerful international forces, to the hindering of these movements' external political role.
4. the struggle and conflict between the Zionist project and these movements: there is a history and a heritage of cultural, material and civilizational conflict between the two sides that revolves around Palestine. One figure of these movements contends that "Islam is the sole obstacle left in the path of their scheme...Their plan can be summarized in using the West's thick bludgeon to strike our project of awakening. This is accomplished through their reinforcing of their alliance with the West and driving the latter to clash with Islam so as to exhaust both sides."⁵⁰
5. the general state of weakness amidst which the Islamic and Arab nation resides, and which is summarized in someone's quote that "it will not be possible for Muslims to anticipate their own future as long as it is dictated by others, and Muslims today are abject...and their share of the international affairs is deficient. Moreover, although liberty, human rights and democracy are all slogans that are raised high, in concern to Muslims, they are seemingly benevolent expressions by which harm meant."⁵¹ Surely, this reality and weakness influences these movements' capacity for international action and influence.

The Attributes of the Political Islam Movements' Relations with the Foreign Environment

In reviewing the nature of the interaction, development and role of the Political Islam phenomenon in regard to the international environment and relations, one can observe a number of this relationship's general characteristics and attributes. The following are the most important ones:

1. this phenomenon's movements' positions and policies towards the international environment and variables tend to take the form of reactions instead initiatives. They can become pre-emptive initiatives only through the forming of a strategy according to which these movements approach international relations.
2. "the political-intellectual framework" is semi-absent in these movements in most of its historic career in dealing with contemporary international relations and concepts. Although, there exists

⁴⁹ Kamel Al-Sharif, Op.cit, 5th episode (5/9/2000).

⁵⁰ Rashed Al-Ghannoushi, Op.cit, p100.

⁵¹ Hassan Al-Turabi, "The Islamic Stream's Priorities for the Coming Three Decades" (Arabic), *The Islamic Future* (Arabic), issue no. 2 (London: November 1991), p70-71.

general Islamic frameworks, based on *Shari'a*, in the field of international and foreign relations that guide these movements.⁵² Since mid 1990s, they started to show progress in this regard.

3. these movements' "presence" displayed little initiative and limited influence over the direction of international politics or the foreign relations of the regional states in accordance with their interests and objectives, except those actors in the Palestinian arena. In addition, they have been incapable to found institutional (not individual) channels to communicate with the international and regional organizations (i.e. the U.N., E.U., NATO, League of Arab States and Islamic Conference Organization).
4. the large change and development in these movements' political discourse towards the international politics, especially since the latter half of the nineties of the twentieth century. After they had dealt in generalities and religious idealism, their political discourse became more specific, contemporary, opened to and interested in the international variables and their importance and effect on the regional politics and the movements themselves. They moved away from the demarcation in their view of the international powers and towards the acknowledgement of the grey area in the international political work. This twilight area is not necessarily incompatible with idealism and Islamic realism. This realization motivated their discourse to call for "openness" and the necessity for "coexistence and dialogue" with the other, and it made them emphasize the "dialogue of civilizations" rather than their clash.
5. the nature of these movements' role and "action and influence" in terms of the international relations used to be concentrated in the Islamic and Arab regional arena. It did not directly influence the positions and policies of international powers, except during the colonial phase.⁵³ Moreover, the regional official role these movements played focused mainly on resolving the conflicts arising between the regional states via the "mediation" mechanism.
6. the procession of these movements' international political communications demonstrated that despite their creedal nature, sometimes they were "pragmatic" or predisposed towards "pragmatism" in terms of the practice of political work at the international level.
7. the individual initiatives proposed by important figures in the Islamic movement represented the most important form or instrument for the movement's international political action. It was more influential than the specialized institutions, with their programs and tools for action and influence, would have been.

The Theoretical Approach to International Relations Incorporated into the Political Islam Movements' Framework

There seems to be an absence of an engrained intellectual and political framework or a strategic theory of international relations in the Political Islam movements; however, some of their foreign politics practices, propositions and political views as represented in their statements. In addition, their figures' and leaders' statements might represent to them the general principles of the core of their international relations' framework or theory. The most important frameworks can be inferred from those practices and statements as follows:

1. these movements believe and hold international relations to be a human necessity. As a result, it is also necessary to understand and comprehend the international reality, equations and complications. It follows "the necessity of comprehending that we do not exist in a vacuum.

⁵² See for example *The International Relations' Project in Islam* (Arabic) (Cairo: International Institute for Islamic Thought, 1996). 12 volumes.

⁵³ The September attacks caused some players of the 'Islamic violence' phenomenon (Al-Qa'idah for example)- which are not a part of this study- to change the effect and "action" process in the international community from the indirect to the direct way to achieve certain aims of these terrorist groups.

Instead, we interact with a local society and regional environment and international community...for no state or society, whoever it might be, can live in a total seclusion from the rest of the world.”⁵⁴

2. the impetus and goal for acting at the international level, according to these movements, are achieving the best interests of both the people and country and Muslim unity everywhere. However, priority is given to achieving the interests of the Arab and Islamic sphere everywhere via peaceful means. These objectives define the movements’ international mobility and role in “reforming the within,” in Arabic *Islah that al-bayn*, “conflict resolution” or violence and conflict prevention through political pacification and positive participation in conflict and crisis management.⁵⁵
3. the rule of “action” and “influence” in the international sphere is based on “achieving true independence which results in a comprehensive development of the nation’s resources and end in Islamic unity, passing through Arabic unity first, making the Islamic nation a match for other world nations on the basis of equality...[enabling it to] interact with the rest of the nations and peoples of the world and its civilizations.”⁵⁶ This exercise of “action” condones the reliance on “the continuation of mobility and pushing” within one’s capacity, in adherence to the Qur’anic verse “I only desire reform to the best of my power” (v.88), and on the values and mechanisms of dialogue and tolerance with the West, its institutions and world countries. It also promotes the balance between “realism and idealism in political discourse, drawing on realistic terminology governed by Islamic law [rules of *Shari’a*]...[It is a] discourse that always needs to be revised and updated so as to remain congruent with the age and a provider of realistic solutions for the nations’ problems.”⁵⁷
4. it is crucial to search for commonalties to cooperate and coalition with the international sphere; the extent of this cooperation between these movements and the international forces and factors rests on a formula that reconciles the two dimensions of interests and Islamic constants. Some of these movements’ writings emphasizes on “the principle of cooperation amongst states – governments and peoples – in accordance with everyone’s interest, on the basis of equal rights, respect of states’ autonomy and sovereignty and non-interference their internal affairs. The complication of life problems and its dangerous ramifications on the human society necessitates the cooperation with the non-governmental organizations that have benevolent humanitarian objectives and adopt the defending of the peoples’ interests.”⁵⁸
5. it is crucial to enhance the international system’s pluralism; despite its criticism of the nature of the new international system and the unipolar hegemony, these movements suggest an approach that is based on that this system is not a destiny there is no other option but to accept. Instead, it is possible to interact with it on the basis of “ascertaining features of a new international evenness from latent forces”⁵⁹ with promising future, and then establishing cooperation relations, correlation, or alliances with these forces. Examples of such forces are China, Japan, Germany, and the European Union. This aims at establishing a sort of connection with these forces

⁵⁴ Issam Al-‘Aryan, “The Interaction with the International Community...Its Foundations, Importance, and Taboos: Lessons Drawn from the Sudanese Experience 3” (Arabic), *The Society Magazine* (Arabic), issue 1397 (Kuwait: 25/4/2000), p43.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ “The Regimes’ Reconciliation with the Peoples and Vital Powers is the Answer” (Arabic), an interview with Issam Al-‘Aryan, member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, 4/12/2002, Aljazeera.net, <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/AC2D6CBF-D154-49A4-AACAD-6706CFA|AB4.htm>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ The Public Policies of the Islamic Action Front Party (Arabic), Op.cit.

⁵⁹ Isaac Al-Farhan, Op.cit, p189.

nominated to share the U.S.A the management of world affairs.⁶⁰ Finally, one of the movements' figures sees that "its real public world represents a reality of communications where there is no space for estrangements...and we are deserving of developing the guided (*Al-Rashid*) just model for a new international order."⁶¹

6. they promote advantageous cooperation, for the time being, with the international organizations, especially the U.N. They also call for both reform and autonomy in these organizations.

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⁶⁰ Jamal Al-Barzanji "Closing Session: Review and Summary of Seminar Events and Propositions" in Ahmad Yousef's book *The Future of the Islamic Work: The Islamic Movement in light of the Transformations and the Gulf Crisis* (Arabic), Op.cit, p502.

⁶¹ Hassan Al-Turabi, "The Islamic Stream's Priorities for the Coming Three Decades" (Arabic), Op.cit, p72.