There is a curious mirroring between Islamism and nationalism. In the Arab world, with the failure of socialist and authority-type nationalisms (centralized and one-party systems, such as in Algeria and Egypt), this is often intensified by pan-Arabism (the Ba’athist movement), which developed during the 1970s and 80s. Then there is the most virulent kind of Islamism, that of the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front), the GIA (Armed Islamic Group), the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, or the Gama’at and Egyptian Jihad. However, the monarchies have been confronted with more multifaceted (protean) and participatory forms of Islamism, in general in the Muslim Brotherhood’s circle of influence. In all cases, Islamism has had a social base which is closely associated with nationalists and socialists (the modern intelligentsia and middle classes) and barely attracted the representatives of the traditional religious elite in the first instance. The symmetry between Arab nationalism and Islamism is especially evident as Ba’athism was itself inspired by Islamic supranationalism in its denunciation of the artificial nature of nationhood emerging from colonialism, in favor of a great and mythic Arabic “ummah.” Each Arab country was therefore defined as a region, and not as a nation. There is no contradiction here between a linguistic and cultural Arabic identity and a logic of Islamization, except among Christian Arabs, who identify with pan-Arabism but no longer with Islamism.

However, in the non-Arab world, Islamism has developed inconsistently in relation to an ethnic identity and in the direction of political reconstruction of national ties to Islam, rather than by an ethnic-linguistic reference.

In Turkey and Iran, Islamism has developed against a secular nationalism with strong ethnic-linguistic overtones, which attempted to root national identity in the pre-Islamic period (in the case of Kemal Atatürk...
and the Pahlavi dynasty). For example, Erbakan, founder of the chain of parties that took up the same themes after each dissolution, explicitly saw in Islamism a way of reintegrating the Kurds, excluded by Turkish hegemony of language and identity, into the political game. Khomeini, who always protested against the references to the Persians before Islam in the legitimation of the Persian nation, authorized the public usage of languages other than Persian. In making legitimacy for the Iranian state itself out of Shiism, he constructed a social base greater than that formed from Persian speakers (90 percent of Iranians are Shiite, but only 50 percent have Persian as their mother tongue).

Similarly in Pakistan, Islamism was vigorously opposed by those who wanted to form a single “Muslim state” after the 1947 division. For Ali Jinnah, the founder of the country, the Muslims from the Indian Empire constituted a community that was more cultural than it was strictly religious, and he thereby envisaged the construction of a “secular” Muslim identity. This was opposed by Abul A’la Maududi, the founder of Jama’at-i Islami, the Islamist party, for whom the only identity possible for Pakistan was to for it to be an Islamic state and not just a Muslim one; that is to say, a state whose ideology, institutions, law, and foreign policy should be based on Sharia law. In making Urdu the national language, even if it was the language of “immigrants” from India, the Pakistani state attempted to break with all ethnic logic in the construction of the nation-state (the Punjabis make up 60 percent of the population and they hold the key state apparatus, but their language has no status). In doing so, the Islamist Pakistanis, like the Turks and Iranians, proposed less an internationalist alternative to nationalism than another foundational logic for the existing state that is very widely multiethnic (unlike the majority of Arab countries). This logic comes back to widening the state’s social and political base by replacing a form of ethnolinguistic legitimacy with an ideological and political construction (which of course marginalizes Christian minorities, but the denominational question does not carry the same intensity as the ethnic problem).

However, Islamist ideology is very opposed to nationalism. It rejects the nation-state in favor of the “ummah” and lays claim to a universal model of government. We have regularly seen Islamic-state constitutional projects thrive, which in theory are universally applicable, regardless of the history and specific character of the countries in question. The Muslim Brotherhood is organized in regional chapters
(thus taking up the Ba’ath terminology, which perceives current countries simply as regions of a future pan-Arabic state). Moreover, certain movements embrace the concept of caliphate to better challenge the legitimacy of the nation-state (Maududi and Hizb ut-Tahrir, a party established in London which today recruits predominately young people from immigrant backgrounds). Islamists focus on the state, not on nations. In Iran, the Islamic revolution has equipped the country with a rather sophisticated and only mildly Islamic constitution, with the decisive exception of the status of the supreme leader who does not necessarily need to be Iranian because he has the mission to be the supreme leader of the whole of the ummah. But by focusing on the state, they have by definition steered to take into account territorialization and the realities of societies, whether they are the product of a long history (Iran and Egypt), or the products of colonial divisions that have been stabilized by strategic equilibriums and the interests of global or regional powers.

It is the issues surrounding the conquest and management of the state which have made Islamists – or in any case, “centrist” currents – become nowadays more nationalist than attached to the establishment of an Islamic state. The centrist movements are those which have a strategic policy to seek state power in the first instance; and in the second instance, whether they come to power (Iran) or not, adopt a management-based policy and therefore participate in a political field that they have contributed to opening up. In effect, Islamists target a concrete state (Egypt, Turkey, Iran, and so forth), which has its own political sphere and which fits into a strategic space that it has inherited rather than modeled. To take or manage the power, it is necessary to have a program, alliances, and an awareness of the complexity of social demands. The Iranian Islamists quickly discovered this and divided themselves into conservatives, obsessed with their enforcement of power, and liberals convinced that only a democratic opening could allow power to be managed. The Turkish Islamists discovered the ways of politics through their municipal management, with the “liberal” fringe which today takes the form of the AK Party (Justice and Development Party), which is led by the former mayor of Istanbul, Tayyep Erdogan. After the cancellation of the parliamentary elections, the Algerian FIS entered into the San Egidio process together with a highly varied assortment of ideological movements. In nearly all the monarchies (except in Saudi Arabia), the Muslim Brotherhood
is represented in the parliaments (Jordan, Kuwait, and Morocco). It is because they have been seized by the state that the centrist Islamist movements have become nationalist.

Conversely, the radical “jihad” movements have added to their rejection of nationalism the explicit will to stay in a state of rupture with state-based politics, either by being unconcerned with it (Hizb ut-Tahrir, al Qaeda), or by attacking it with terrorist activities aimed at political figures. Blind, full-scale terrorism, like that practiced by the GIA in Algeria, can momentarily destabilize the power in place, but it reinforces that power in the long term, because it is incompatible with the constitution of a social foundation and strong policies which will allow a way toward power or the constitution of alternating political power. The antinationalist position can only be maintained by a rejection of the state framework. In advocating the creation of a Palestinian state, the Palestinian group Hamas became an Islamic nationalist party, though a number of Palestinian refugees (or rather, the descendants of the 1948 and 1967 refugees), knowing that they would never be allowed back, joined the most radical internationalist movements (Abdallah Azzam, founder of what was to become the al Qaeda movement, and Youssouf Ramzi and Odeh Zoubeyda, both members of al Qaeda).

“Territorialized” Islamist movements with a statist strategy all adopt a perspective that is more nationalist than ideological, and strongly tinged with anti-imperialism. Therefore they rediscover their old political, secular adversaries, as we see in Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, and even in Lebanon (where Hezbollah is perceived as nationalist) and in Pakistan (where the Left’s anti-imperialism unites in de facto support for the Afghan Taliban). However, the “deterriorialized” movements, such as al Qaeda or Hizb ut-Tahrir, simultaneously reject all national logic and are in radical opposition to the established order. Terrorism and deterritorialization go hand in hand.

The most typical example of the nationalization of Islamism is of course Iran, which since the ceasefire with Iraq (June 1988), has gradually fallen into line, leading a foreign policy based on its own national interests, without ideological consideration except in political discourse. If the battle between the conservatives and liberals is a fierce one when it comes to domestic issues, it has barely any impact on foreign policies, except with regard to the symbolism of the relationship between the United States (US) and Israel. During the Gulf War (1990-1991),
Iran did not impede the deployment of US troops. Iran has gradually stopped supporting its traditional intermediaries: the Iraqi Shiites in 1991, the Bahrainis in 1996, and the Afghans in 1998. In the Caucasus, Iran supports Armenia over Azerbaijan, in spite of its largely Shiite population, and cooperated with Russia to put an end to the civil war in Tajikistan (June 1997). In Afghanistan, Iran found itself in the same camp as Russia, India and the US in order to maintain the Northern alliance against the Taliban during the 2001 campaign. In the Gulf, despite the dispute with the United Arab Emirates over the status of the islands of Tumb and Moussa (occupied by the Shah in 1971), Iran has become closer with the Arabic conservative countries (Saudi Arabia and Qatar). Finally, while offering material support to Hezbollah in Lebanon and to the Palestinians, Iran remained in the background during the Second Intifada in 2000. Tehran strongly condemned the World Trade Center attacks, but this time with the voice of the supreme leader himself and not just that of the liberal president, Mohammed Khatami. At the same time, Iran wants to be a key player, not only in the Gulf, but also in the Levant, and seeks to profit from the failures of the Oslo Accords.

This “nationalization” of the Iranian movement can be explained by the practice of power leading to identification with a nation-state and with a specific political space, and therefore to pragmatism and realism. But this can be seen in nearly all of the Islamist movements. It always goes hand in hand with seeking political openness, electoral alliance, and integration into the national political scene. When the political scene is more or less open (Jordan, Turkey, Kuwait, Morocco), Islamists occupy the center Right, being nationalist in foreign policy and reactionary in domestic policies (particularly on the question of women’s rights). The Algerian FIS has backed down on armed combat and defends a pluralist approach, (its armed branch, the AIS, declared a truce after having been attacked as much by the GIA as by the army). The Lebanese Hezbollah conducted itself above all as a nationalist movement and is largely recognized as such by the Christians in Lebanon. The Yemeni Islah party played a role in Yemen’s unification against the wishes of its Saudi mentor. In Sudan, Hassan Turabi led an equally nationalist policy before being overthrown by the military; but it is undoubtedly too soon to see a victory for secularism over “Islamic totalitarianism,” because, in General Bashir one finds a classic military dictatorship. In Tajikistan, the Islamic Renaissance Party (PRI), since coming into power (1997), has become completely
nationalist, defending the Tajiks against the Taliban (by supporting Massoud) and the Uzbeks. Massoud’s party, the Afghan Jamiat-i Islami, no longer has any Islamist references, and presents itself as a national party with its strong grassroots emphasis on ethnic issues. The nationalization of Islamism is clearly illustrated by Palestine. The Islamist parties (Jihad, Hamas) never criticize Arafat over Islam, but for his pragmatic compromises with Israel. During the Second Intifada, secular movements and Islamists became indistinguishable (the FPLP [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine] uses suicide bombers and the leaders of both parties attend militants’ funerals). In Algeria too, the fading away of political Islam was clearly apparent in the Black Spring demonstrations in 2001. The cause was the same (the monopolization of power and riches by the military oligarchy) and it had the same participants (the disaffected youth) as the great pro-FIS electoral wave in 1991. The only difference being that Islam had completely disappeared from their slogans.

Islamists’ social-revolutionary message is gradually being worn away in favor of an insistence upon Sharia law. We particularly see it today in Islamists’ caution with regard to the theme of social justice. Even the Refah party – undoubtedly the most political of the Islamist parties – has no social message. It preaches good relations between employers and workers, but its workers’ trade union (Hakki) is still embryonic. It has not condemned privatizations. The question of privatization is important; in Iran it separates the Islamic left from the conservatives. In Egypt we see the Islamists’ abandonment of the social terrain most markedly. The land “counterreformation,” which was carried out under the auspices of Mubarak and came into effect in 1998 (it released agricultural leases, allowing landowners to increase rents and take back their land), was approved by the Gama’at Islamiyya in the name of Sharia (the primacy of property-ownership rights). Islamists therefore enter into the political game with conservative, even reactionary stances with regard to values and the status of women. But they are generally more modern with regard to their economic vision and well accustomed to political pragmatism, which is more hidden than revealed by their moral conservatism. It is also worth noting that a whole fringe of secular nationalists are rediscovering themselves as followers of moral values in the name of defending identity against globalization (the Cairo 52 trial in 2002 was barely condemned by the Egyptian Left, which had rather played on the moral rearmament of a nation faced with American pressures).
This normalization affects even the very radical movements, such as the Islamic Egyptian Jihad. One of the movement’s leaders, Osama Rushdie, condemned the 9/11 attacks and the “jihadist” line advocated by Zawahiri and Bin Laden.\footnote{Interview in Al Sharq al Awsat, January 25, 2002.}

Another important aspect of the prioritizing of the national scene is the slackening of ties with a migrant population which does not follow the movement and which becomes increasingly internationalist. The most typical case in hand is that of the Turkish Refah party (we continue to refer back to this name after its dissolution). Its European branch, Milli Görüş, has trouble keeping up with the political evolution and the party schisms because the European members of the movement have interests other than the establishment of a coalition government in Ankara. Milli Görüş is aiming to become more internationalist and more “salafist” (that is to say, concerned about the strict practice of religion), instead of being an external branch of the party. In Europe it is linked to the Arabic Muslim Brotherhood and develops a program for the return to religion, in total rupture with the growing secularism in the original party. The FIS has, for the same reasons, surprisingly hardly broken through among emigrants, and the Algerian youth who become radicalized in France do not go to Algeria to fight, but to Afghanistan. However, in Great Britain the Pakistani youth find it easier to go to Pakistan, but it is precisely because the activist networks there are internationalist; indeed, you can find these same youths in Afghanistan and in Kashmir. The fact that the Rushdie affair began in Great Britain and was hardly spoken about in the streets of the Middle East demonstrates that the radical internationalization logic is stronger among the migrant population than in the Muslim countries. In a certain way, the same phenomenon is produced for the Palestinians. The refugees from before 1948 found it easier to join internationalist movements (Abdoullah Azzam, and Khattab, who was beaten in Chechnya) than the ranks of the OLP (Palestine Liberation Organization) or Jihad. Nearly everywhere, emigrants of the Muslim Brotherhood are confronted with a choice: either political integration into the new country; or the contrary, an internalization which brings them closer to the salafists, the Saudis, and the worldwide Islamic league, which wishes to avoid the integration of Islam into Western culture. This dilemma can be seen in the hesitance of the large French Muslim organizations, such as the Union of Islamic Organizations in France
(UOIF). Should they integrate fully in a French Islam, or should they give priority to the internationalist aspect? In choosing to play the card of consulting the Muslims of France, the UOIF seems to have chosen the path of “nationalization.”

Nationalization is accentuated by the predominance of a relatively stable international strategic space on the choice of supranational ideologies. During the Gulf War from 1990-1991, the different branches of the Muslim Brotherhood took a position according to the strategic position of their respective countries (the Kuwaiti chapter approved the call to American troops, whereas Jordan condemned it). The 9/11 attacks demonstrated how everywhere, except among the Taliban (who are not Islamists), it was the state logic which operated (including, and this is new, in the public opinion), despite the hostility toward Americans and a certain fascination with the figure of Bin Laden.

At the end of the 1990s, it became apparent that nearly all of the Islamist movements were more nationalist than Islamist. Their fields of action were limited to just one country. But this nationalization goes along with the renunciation of a key element: the requirement of a monopoly of religious representation in politics, replaced by the acceptance of an autonomous political space in relation to religion. Nationalization (becoming part of the mainstream) and the primacy of politics go together. It is because their activities take place within a national political field that Islamists are brought to pose the question of political pluralism.
ABSTRACT

It is through the development of their action within the framework of the nation-state that Islamic movements have become nationalist, or at least nationalized, in opposition to their original ideology which was internationalist. The major Islamic movements have thereby contributed to the strengthening of the nation-state, and today they find themselves rather close to the secular nationalists in their opposition to the United States. Conversely, violent radicalism is identified with movements that are disconnected from any territory, such as al Qaïda.