“A Habermasian Analysis of Arab-West Inter-Governmental and Inter-Ambassadorial Relations: Implications for Western Diplomatic Training”

By

Mohammad Ahmad Hasan Al-Jararwah

B.A. 2008 (Jordan University of Science and Technology, Jordan)

M.A. 2013 (University of Wollongong, Australia)

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education*

The University of Newcastle

Australia

2018

This research was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship
I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision.

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo 3.
Acknowledgments

As I reflect upon the present blessing of this accomplishment, I am thankful that this dissertation has led me to traverse many unexpected adventures and build wonderful relationships along the way.

First and foremost, my greatest thankfulness is due to Allah for His guidance and fortification of my patience and determination during the process of completing this dissertation.

I would like to express my sincere admiration of, and eternal gratitude to my outstanding supervisors, Emeritus Professor Terry Lovat and Professor John Fischetti at the University of Newcastle, Australia, both of whom have been tremendous mentors and an endless source of energy for me. Thank you for encouraging my research and supporting me to develop as a researcher, whilst providing sound advice on this dissertation and my career.

I am also grateful to the kind librarians who were always happy to assist me at the National Library of Australia, Canberra, where I spent countless hours over the past year.

Many people have helped me along this journey, firstly I wish to honour the two people who made me the man I am today: My father, Ahmad Hasan Al-Jararwah and my mother, Amneh Al-Jararwah. Thank you wholeheartedly for your unbounded love, prayers and support throughout this challenging period of my life, and always. I must also include my deepest gratitude to my siblings, Shireen, Nisreen, Areen, Rasha, Raghad and Essam for all the support they have given me.
I also wish to thank my father-in-law Andre Fombertaux and my sisters-in-law Anik and Elena Fombertaux, Tristan Earl, as well as a very special thank you to Alex Barrett-Meyering for his extraordinary effort and support.

Hayyan Hamed A. Alrosan, I wish to thank you for your unbelievable support, encouragement and friendship, as well as my dear friends Anthony Siokos and Michael Kontinos.

Finally, I cannot ever adequately express my appreciation for, and indebtedness to the love of my life, my beautiful wife and best friend Olenka Al-Jararwah, who illuminated this whole academic journey with her unwavering support. THANK YOU for always believing in me, coping with me and encouraging me to complete this dissertation. Thank you to my precious baby girl Ayla, you have been my daily inspiration to complete this dissertation. You and Mama Olenka mean the world to me.
Dedication

For my dearest Mother, Father and

Late Mother-in-Law Giselle Snezana Fombertaux (Petkovic)
Abstract

Throughout history, socio-political experts in the Arab-Islamic and Western worlds have embraced the prospect of fruitful Arab-West inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial relations. In the fields of international relations and education, there is substantial research conducted for reconciling the socio-political and religious dilemmas in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Nonetheless, pondering the intransigent deterioration of affairs and the rise of extremism and terrorism, the region has become a focal point of mainstream Western media without evidence of political resolutions or sensible Western foreign policies. Moreover, much of recent critical Western works on the interpretations of political Islam from ontological perspectives require further attention. Nevertheless, misapprehensions about both historical and contemporary Islamic thought are evident, particularly among prominent Western diplomats and politicians. Therefore, it has become vital to devise a contemporary diplomatic training program for future Western representatives to the MENA region, largely since the methods of Western international relations theory (IRT) have been labelled as Eurocentric, unaccommodating and insufficient. The main objectives of this dissertation are as follows: to provide elucidations on how political Islam is observed, especially when Jürgen Habermas’s descriptive, interpretive and critically self-reflective methods of analysis are applied to it; to provide a holistic analysis of the historical factors that influence political Islam among Arab Muslims; to explore how these factors diverge from existing assumptions about political Islam in the Western setting; and, to pinpoint and elaborate upon extant hindrances in Western inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial discussions. The findings revealed numerous shortcomings in current approaches to political Islam and also highlighted the factors behind
its popularity among Arab Muslims. The findings also identified apprehensions towards
Islamic thought in the Western setting and pinpointed effective political and educational
notions through the application of Habermas’s critical theory and theory of communicative
action. Finally, the dissertation outlined the rationale for a diplomatic training program for
future Western diplomats and politicians.

**Key words:** Arab-West inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial relations, Western
international relations theory, MENA region, Arab Muslims, political Islam and
Jürgen Habermas.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments iii
Abstract vi
Abbreviations xii

## Chapter 1: Introduction and Conceptual Framework
1
  1.1 Overview 1
  1.2 Research Background 1
  1.3 Research Objectives 5
  1.4 Significance of the Study 5
  1.5 Research Questions 6
  1.6 Dissertation Structure and Organisation 7

## Chapter 2: Methodology
9
  2.1 Overview 9
  2.2 Research Methodology 10
    2.2.1 Habermas’s Critical Theory 14
      2.2.1.1 The Rise of Habermas’s Critical Theory 32
    2.2.2 Habermas’s Theory of Communicative Action 37
    2.2.3 Research Procedures 39
    2.2.4 Why Habermas’s Critical Theory and the Theory of Communicative Action? 40

47
  3.1 Overview 47
  3.2 The Intransigent Socio-Political and Regional Challenges of Arab Nations and the Western Intervention in the MENA Region 48
    3.2.1 The Unceasing Israeli-Palestinian Conflict 49
3.2.1.1 The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Dilemmas 51
3.2.1.2 The Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration 63
3.2.1.3 The Zionist Movement and Supporters in Europe 68
3.2.1.4 The King-Crane Report 75
3.2.1.5 The Circumstances of Uncertainty in the MENA Region 79
3.2.1.6 The Nationalist Zionist Movement 86
3.2.1.7 The Palestinian Politics and the Arab-Israeli Uprisings 94
3.2.1.8 The Reactions of the European Union towards the Election of Hamas 99

3.3 The Emergence of Political Islam in the MENA Region 106
3.3.1 The MB at a Glance 114
3.3.2 The Impact of MB Members During and Post the Arab Spring 118

3.4 Reconciling and Integrating the Arab-West International Relations 125
3.4.1 The Role of Habermas’s Intuitions and Contemporary Islamic Thought 128
3.4.2 Interpretations of Social Realities 143

3.5 Religious Based Knowledge and Proven Historical Islamic Thought on International Relations 151
3.5.1 The Arab-Islamic Civilisation of Al-Andalus and the Impact of Islamic Agency on International Relations 162
3.5.2 Political Islam and the Application of Habermas’s Descriptive, Interpretive and Critically Self-reflective Analysis 173
3.5.2.1 The Application of Habermas’s Descriptive, Interpretive and Critically Self-reflective Analysis

3.6 Western Foreign Policies and Ramifications on the MENA Region

3.6.1 The Frustration of Arabs towards Uncertain Western Political Approaches

3.6.2 Ramifications for the MENA Region

3.6.3 Highlighting the Necessity for a Diplomatic Training Program for Western Diplomats and Politicians

3.7 Summary

Chapter 4: Discussion of the Analysis

4.1 Overview

4.2 The Application of Habermas’s Critical Theory and the Theory of Communicative on Political Islam

4.3 The Popularity of Political Islam among Arab Muslims in the MENA Region and the Existing Perceptions in the Western Setting

4.4 The Current Gaps in Western Diplomatic Training and the Existing Hindrances in Inter-Governmental and Inter-Ambassadorial Dialogues

4.5 Findings

4.6 Discussion of Findings

Chapter 5: Diplomatic Training Program for Western Diplomats and Politicians: Towards Strengthened Future Arab-West International Relations

5.1 Overview
5.2 Western Inter-Governmental and Inter-Ambassadorial Relations 249

5.3 Diplomatic Training Program for Future Western Diplomats and Politicians 254

5.3.1 The Role of Islamic Notions 256

5.3.2 The Role of Habermas 258

5.3.3 Western Approaches and Secularism 269

5.3.4 Islamic Socio-political Traits and Western Interests in the MENA Region 271

5.3.5 Islamic Affairs 278

5.3.6 Habermasian Notions and Theoretical Islamic Ontologies 281

5.4 Summary 298

Chapter 6: Conclusion 301

6.1 Limitations and Recommendations 302

Reference 305
Abbreviations

DA: Democracy Assistance
DFID: Department for International Development
DS: Democracy, Development and Delivery
EAP: Eastern Partnership
ENP: European Neighbourhood Policy
ESS: European Security Strategy
HAMAS: Harakat Al-Muqawamah Al-Islamiyyah
IDF: Israeli Defence Force
ISIL: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
MB: Muslim Brotherhood
MENA: Middle East and North Africa
PfDSP: Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity
PLO: Palestine Liberation Organisation
SCAF: Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
UM: Union for the Mediterranean
WW2: World War II
WZO: World Zionist Organisation
Chapter 1: Introduction and Conceptual Framework

1.1 Overview

Chapter one explains the context in which this PhD dissertation was written, including the research background, research objectives and significance of the dissertation to the field of Inter-Governmental and Inter-Ambassadorial Relations and Education. The chapter finally outlines the research questions to which the thesis responds.

1.2 Research Background

For centuries, Arab Muslims in the Middle East and the North Africa (MENA) region have shared mutual interests with the Western world in defence, economics, politics, religion, language and culture. However, recent decades have seen a deterioration of Arab-West international relations, especially when dealing with socio-political and religious issues. Some of these relations, especially in the areas of political affairs and defence strategies, have been built on fragile grounds and mistrust, especially from 1881 through to the 1960s. This period saw the colonisation and occupation of Arab lands in the MENA region by European nations, including Great Britain, France and Italy. Countries such as Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine and Sudan were under the administration of Britain, France took control of Algeria, Lebanon Morocco, Syria and Tunisia, whilst Libya was colonised by the Italians from the 1910s through to 1947. In the present context of the geo-political settings of Arab nations, it is vital to analyse how these nations emerged as separate states from one another. This enables the study to connect the dots and provides a clearer understanding of the socio-political history of the MENA region. Additionally, this analysis delivers an
insightful historical demonstration of the outcomes of the British colonial authority and the mandate system applied by the League of Nations in the MENA region (Baxter & Akbarzadeh, 2008).

From the 1830s onwards, the entire Arabian Gulf region had been under British protection, and during the 1930s – 1970s, new states were established in the region, including Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia. The disparities in religious and cultural practices between the Arab Muslims in the MENA region and Western societies led to a culture of misunderstanding and the creation of numerous misconceptions that extended the political gap between the two sides and weakened international relations (Al-Kandari & Gaither, 2011). This has led to a degree of suspicion on the part of Arab Muslims towards the political initiatives and negotiations conducted by many Western nations, suspicions that are due to prejudices and the foreign interests involved. As a result, the gap between the respective sides has dramatically extended and led to complicated political matters that have become harder to overcome. This has led in turn to growth in the popularity of political-religious movements in the MENA region, such as the Muslim Brotherhood (MB).

Explaining the origins of movements such as the MB is contentious. One interpretation is that these movements are a reaction to the totalitarianism and irrational secularism adopted by Arab states, and that have in turn imposed oppressive regimes on their own societies (Nashashibi, 2013). Others emphasise the opportunistic nature of political Islamic movements, taking advantage of dramatic changes across these regions and utilising instability as an effective tool of persuasion for the people,
so necessitating the emergence of political Islamic movements as front lines of
defence (Effarah, 2016b). Political Islamic movements have also been indicted for co-opting
democratic values for the purpose of transitioning themselves into regimes of
authority (Khan, 2014). Conversely, Gelvin (2014) argues that political Islamic
movements, such as the Ennahda Party in Tunisia affiliated with the MB, has
progressively reached out to its secular opponents and included itself in various
national dialogues. More importantly, the Ennahda Party joined other observers with
different political agendas and visions in supporting the Tunisian Draft Constitution,
considered to be the most liberal among Arab nations (Gelvin, 2014).

Analysing and clarifying the role of misconceptions in popular narratives
around political Islam, whether driven deliberately or unwittingly by Western
diplomats, politicians, policymakers, think tanks and media reports, has been no
straightforward mission, but rather a complex undertaking. Furthermore, the task has
required in-depth knowledge on the part of the knower in order to scrutinise the factors
that fuel the socio-political divisions that currently hover over the MENA region in its
relations with the Western world. For these reasons, the researcher, as an Arab Muslim
from Jordan and an Australian citizen who works in the diplomatic setting in
Australia, needed to locate himself in this PhD dissertation. The significance of
allocating the researcher within this current dissertation provides the targeted audience
with broad intimations on who the researcher is, and what his potential diplomatic and
political perceptions are. In addition, this could be of great interest to the potential
audience in attempting to identify the core stimuli that have inspired the researcher to
conduct this educational and political research, as well as the value that the audience should expect to gain or grasp from it.

People across the globe often observe dramatic political unrest in the MENA region and speculate about the underlying causes. They also witness the non-identical reactions of certain Western authorities and foreign policymakers towards these unrests, considering what the Western world can achieve or do to resolve the unrest. Nevertheless, how often do we see Western diplomats, politicians and foreign policymakers succeed in working on those issues or containing socio-political challenges in the MENA region? The answer to this is most likely to be never, especially when pondering on the ongoing rise of extremism and terrorism, as well as the frightening loss of humanity, the current refugee crisis and the devastation of physical and cultural infrastructure that is sweeping through many Arab nations in the MENA region.

The lack of success in containing unrest and challenges in the MENA region leaves observers with few options but to encourage political researchers and rational thinkers to work on revising and enhancing certain Western foreign policies towards the region and developing more balanced political Islamic approaches than have been common in the past. The intended revision and enhancement provide pragmatic resolutions aimed at better handling of the challenges erupting in the MENA region, especially when considering what the Western world can provide. In this context, I am compelled to illustrate political Islam and the socio-political challenges in the MENA region for the information of Western diplomats and politicians, and place myself in the study as the ultimate knower by thoroughly utilising and applying Habermas’s
epistemology. In this context, Habermas’s emphasis on the way the human mind works is deemed to be crucial for this study in achieving its objective of producing an appealing diplomatic training scheme in the context of international relations, a scheme aimed at mitigating the disparities and bridging the gap between Arab Muslims in the MENA region and Western diplomats and politicians.

1.3 Research Objectives

The study endeavours to provide notions of how political Islam is viewed when Habermas’s descriptive, interpretive and critically self-reflective methods of analysis are applied to it. The study also seeks to provide a holistic analysis of the historical factors that influence political Islam among Arab Muslims in the MENA region, and to explore how these factors diverge from existing fundamental assumptions about political Islam in Western governmental and diplomatic settings. The study ultimately attempts to pinpoint the current gaps in Western diplomatic training, as well as the existing hindrances in inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial discussions in pursuance of developing dynamic diplomatic schemes as ways of strengthening Arab-West international relations and societies in the MENA region.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is derived from several fundamental themes. Above all is the exasperating and unresolved social, political and religious state of affairs among Arab Muslims in the MENA region, and the ongoing pressures posed globally in terms of security and commerce. Second, the interpretations of political Islam based on ontological perspectives are limited and require further attention. For example, Alruwaih (2014) emphasises that there is an increased exigency to address
the interpretations of political Islam and its narratives from an ontological perspective since the methods of Western international relations theory of engagement have, to date, emanated primarily from the philosophical foundations of international relations and overlooked ontological grounds. In addition, a great number of narratives that address political Islam have become anachronistic and unaccommodating to the demands of those who believe in the progress that political Islam can bring to society and culture. Third, the current international approach towards political Islam tends to lack a well-structured international relations theory (IRT) emanating from contemporary Islamic thought, which can be realistic, constructive, comprehensive, eclectic and capable of providing solid grounds for improved Arab-West international relations (Alruwaih, 2014). Once developed, the analysis of such a theory will be used to inform the direction that Western inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial relations with Arabs in the MENA region should take.

1.5 Research Questions

This dissertation endeavours to answer the following questions:

1. What would political Islam look like when Habermas’s descriptive, interpretive and critically self-reflective methods of analysis are applied to it?

2. What are the historical factors that influence political Islam among Arab Muslims in the MENA region?

3. How do these historical factors diverge from existing fundamental assumptions about political Islam in Western governmental and diplomatic settings?

4. What are the current gaps in Western diplomatic training and the existing hindrances in inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial dialogues?
1.6 Dissertation Structure and Organisation

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 presents the research methodology developed to address the research objectives. This is followed by an elaboration on research procedures, highlighting the motivation behind choosing Habermas’s critical theory and his theory of communicative action as the guiding principles for the analysis and pragmatic appraisals applied throughout the dissertation.

Chapter 3 presents the fields of analysis (literature review). These fields include five primary sections that have been extensively addressed, discussed, and analysed according to Habermas’s epistemological insights against the relevant socio-political events and the literature directed to interpreting them. The first field of analysis will focus on the related socio-political and regional challenges and Western intervention in the MENA region, including an in-depth discussion and analysis of the unceasing Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. The second field of analysis addresses the emergence of political Islam in the MENA region. The third field of analysis is a discussion on reconciling and integrating the Arab-West international relations, including the interpretations of social realities. The fourth field of analysis grounds Political Islam in religious based knowledge and proven historical Islamic thought on international relations. Finally, the fifth field of analysis will address Western foreign policies and their ramifications in the MENA region, and the necessity for a new diplomatic training program for Western diplomats and politicians. This will be followed by a summary section for all fields of analysis.
Chapter 4 presents a discussion about the Habermasian analysis that has been applied throughout the previous fields of analysis. The analysis that is applied guides the study to chapter 5 and a discussion on motivations for a new contemporary diplomatic training program for Western diplomats and politicians in order to successfully deal with Arab Muslims in the MENA region.

Finally, chapter 6 will reiterate the chief objectives of the current dissertation, the analytical approaches implemented by the researcher for accomplishing the research objectives and the findings obtained. In addition, chapter 6 will reveal the limitations of the current dissertation and serve as a platform for further research on the topic at hand.
Chapter 2: Methodology

2.1 Overview

The primary objective of this chapter is to articulate and defend the methodology and the research procedures employed in this dissertation in order to answer the research questions, and so achieve the aims of the study accordingly. The study utilises an analytical and theoretical approach that depends solely on the application of Habermas’s descriptive, interpretive and critically self-reflective intuitions on the reading and coverage of the various phases of the literature review (fields of analysis). Furthermore, this chapter illustrates the significance of selecting Habermas and adopting his critical theory and the theory of communicative action as the guiding principles for the analysis and the pragmatic appraisals throughout the dissertation. In this connection, the dissertation commences with addressing the intransigent socio-political and regional challenges of Arab nations and the Western intervention in the MENA region.

Addressing these challenges is followed by an exploration of the ideology behind political Islam from a Habermasian perspective, and a revelation of the stimuli that provoke political Islam among Arab Muslims in the MENA region. Once the stimuli have been identified, the Habermasian analytical and theoretical approach guides the dissertation to proceed and pinpoint how these stimuli deviate from the current fundamental norms of political Islam in the Western governmental and diplomatic context. By scrutinising the different interpretations of the way political Islam is grasped by Arab Muslims in the MENA region and Western diplomats and politicians, the Habermasian analytical and theoretical
approach provides a platform for the researcher to identify the existing disparities in Western diplomatic training, and the barriers to productive inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial dialogues. In addition, the Habermasian analytical and theoretical approach provides the dissertation with contemporary Habermasian notions for the purpose of devising a well-grounded and contemporary training program for Western diplomats and politicians that is sensitive to the socio-political and regional challenges in the MENA region.

2.2 Research Methodology

Owing to the theoretical nature of this research, this study is largely based on events analysis and pragmatic appraisals, drawing primarily on Habermas’s critical theory and the theory of communicative action.

During the early 1960s – 1970s, the critical theory developed by Western Marxists several decades before had caught the attention of academics and students universally (Held, 1980). Copies of critical theory texts were available free of charge and distributed widely in Germany, leading to mass popularity. The influence of critical theory spread far and wide where authors had implemented the implications of the theory in their works. As a result, “critical theory became a key element in the formation and self-understanding of the New Left” (Held, 1980, p.13). In this connection, different issues, based on actions related to political revolution and theory, have been discarded and, in their place, other discourses and texts have become the focus of intellectual attention (Alway, 1995).

Despite the popularity and influence of their works, critical theorists have also been at the centre of many controversial debates. Some critical theorists
argued that social theory was in crisis, and that the associated concepts that had emerged in the 1960s questioned the practicality and implications of critical theory’s communicative approach (Kellner, 1990). In this context, it can be understood that critical theory has broadly diverged into at least two perspectives, one that was developed by the Social Research Institute in Frankfurt (the Frankfurt School) and the second perspective is the one developed by Habermas.

Habermas’s own interests overlap with his works on critical theory and it is evident that he differs from other critical theorists of the Frankfurt school due to his alleged greater sensitivity towards Enlightenment rationality (Porter & Robinson, 2011). For example, Habermas transitions rationality into prospects associated with communicative action where he shifts the concept of rationality from cohesive discussions to the pragmatics of utilising language (Faigley, 1992).

Habermas asserts that technocratic consciousness does not only allow the classes to show domination but also impacts on the very foundations of human interests (Held, 1980). The second level concerns his theory of knowledge, where Habermas analyses the way instrumentalist reason has taken over modern thought. According to Habermas, if liberation from domination is to be considered as a part of humanity, then it is vital to counter this tendency and to ascertain the necessity of self-reflection for the sake of self-understanding. To do this, Habermas carried out a systematic investigation to assess how human cognitive interests determine the ways that knowledge is generated. Such a systematic investigation contains various ramifications that can be applied to the ideology of political Islam and its
existing approaches in order to enhance modern thought on Arab-West international relations, including self-reflection, rationality and self-criticism.

Habermas’s insights offer opportunities for this dissertation to utilise familiar notions of historical knowledge in order to re-conceive them to address, and perhaps better understand, fragile Arab-West international relations in the context of a rising political Islam. Habermas emphasises the crucial role of religion’s potential resoluteness, when combined with democracy, in offering a pathway for the latter to endure, rather than allowing a deficit of normative content to incapacitate communicative reasoning and its attached empathy (Gordon, 2013). In other words, this idea endorses the notion that democracy and religion are not opposed, as a simple Enlightenment discourse might proffer, but rather that they can effectively serve together in preserving the level of normative content necessary to both communicative reasoning and compassionate action. This view was emphasised in Habermas’s speech for the Frankfurt Booksellers’s Peace Prize in 2001, wherein he argued that the time has come to address thoroughly the phenomenon of religion theoretically (Gordon, 2013). Accordingly, Habermas’s epistemological theory of knowing, one that involves both rational thinking and benevolent reflection, might also contribute and strengthen the platform of thought necessary for a more interconnected understanding of social matters (Lovat, 2013a). Furthermore, the same idea might well offer potential for a more critical analysis of the connection between the endless series of catastrophes faced by the world today and contemporary political life (Vázquez-Arroyo, 2013).
Awareness of perspectives such as inspired by Habermasian theory can assist this dissertation in its quest because its starting-point rests on the notion of human cognitive interests as the prime impellers of their analyses and interpretations of historical affairs. As mentioned, this insight has potential to facilitate understanding of those interests that underline a multitude of current events, many of them catastrophic. Moreover, it can provide a rational pathway for imagining how some of these events might be turned around, including through critical investigation and more thorough understanding of the interests that drove the socio-political and religious affairs that existed during the Arab-Islamic civilisations of medieval Al-Andalus, Spain, ones that stand forever as a model of what Islam can contribute to civilised society.

Habermas’s influence and contribution to education and critical theory have prompted Fultner (2014) to designate him as a highly influential philosopher, and as one of the most significant social theorists worldwide. Habermas’s close relation to other social theorists, such as Horkheimer, Marcuse, Adorno and Apel, and their shared membership with the Frankfurt School, is also relevant. The correlation between multidisciplinary humanities, critical theory, and the notions of Habermas are quite significant and are valuable in application to several fields of education, including political Islam and the future of Western diplomatic training.

Before exploring the concept of critical theory that was developed by Habermas, it is therefore necessary to examine the history of critical theory and its origin in order to develop a better understanding of its implications for this study.
2.2.1 Habermas’s Critical Theory

In 1932, Felix Weil used his father’s money to establish an institute devoted to the study of German society, using Marxist theory. The primary purpose of this institute was to focus on studies of labor movements and anti-Semitism that Weil believed were being ignored by German scholars at the time. Soon after its creation, the institute gained recognition by Goethe University, Frankfurt. The first director of the institute was Carl Grunberg, a Marxist professor at the University of Vienna (Wasserman, 2014). In 1930, Grunberg was succeeded by Max Horkheimer, who worked diligently towards creating an interdisciplinary integration of social sciences. In his efforts, Horkheimer sought to address different socio-political and economic issues while also presenting diverse interpretations of Marxist ideology and its historical application. Horkheimer criticised a purely subjective approach and the absence of consideration for a materialist way of living. Moreover, Horkheimer attempted to end the binaries between consciousness and being, theory and practice, and between facts and values (Held, 1980).

During the 1960s, as student protests surfaced throughout Europe, Theodore Adorno published a fundamental work titled *Negative Dialectics* (Adorno, 1966/2004). In his work, Adorno resisted writing on materialism and metaphysics, and instead addressed the notion of dialectics. On the other hand, Habermas endorsed the notion in which culture, particularly literature, needed to be rationally understood for to its socio-political and ideological context (Williams, 2017).
Born in 1929, Habermas grew up in Germany and did not become extensively involved in philosophy and critical theory until the late 1950s. He joined the Institute in 1956 and worked as Adorno’s assistant. Being influenced by Adorno, Habermas argued for the systematic use of Marxist approaches and Freudian perspectives. Horkheimer, still a leading figure in the Frankfurt school, showed hostility towards Habermas and refused to publish many of his texts in the Frankfurt official publications (Held, 1980). Having taught at Heidelberg, Habermas took up a position in 1964 in philosophy and sociology at Frankfurt University.

Habermas’s efforts were directed from the 1950s onwards towards the reshaping of critical theory. Consequent upon significant disagreements between Habermas and other Frankfurt school academics, he accepted the position of Director of the Max Planck Institute for Research at Starnberg in 1971. As a result, he left Frankfurt, only returning in 1981 after completing his theory of communicative action. Through his critical theory, Habermas highlighted that the domain for unrestricted coordination of actions, along with communicative rationality, increases within a communicative community (Habermas, 1981/1984).

In his discourse theory, Habermas posits that there are three kinds of validity claims that arise through communicative action. These claims are righteousness, sincerity, and truth, all three of which lead towards social coordination. Habermas’s empirical work on different topics, such as the pathologies of societies and moral development, paved the way for a functionalistic approach towards a society with an emancipatory purpose (Held, 1980).
It should also be noted that Habermas attempts to distinguish moral reasoning relying on communicative reason from ethical identity (Bernstein, 1995). In doing so, Habermas goes beyond the concepts of morality presented by Durkheim, who stated that deduction of morality is not possible as the moral rules submitted by any pure theory are logically binding and therefore are not ethical rules at all (Bernstein, 1995). Habermas sought to prove through his own work that through communicative action, language is capable of making changes in the way a society functions. According to Habermas, language is a medium that has allowed people to interact with one another and discuss important issues, whilst bringing about a change in ideologies. In this connection, the primary purpose of Habermas’s theory of communicative action is to highlight the importance of language, especially regarding communication, as it allows people from different communities to come together from various public domains and to discuss important matters (Habermas, 1981/1984).

In considering Habermas’s concept of language, it becomes evident that he has paid less attention to the structure of language and more to the practical use of speech in social interaction (Terry, 1997). By allowing people to gather for public arguments, a change can be brought about in the way things are perceived in society (Habermas, 1981/1984). Subsequently, the individuals of the community will not be restricted by democratic ideologies, but nonetheless can enjoy liberation in thought and actions.

Habermas’s theory of communicative action is primarily based on the difference between two concepts of rationality which, together, enable the
acquisition of practical knowledge about a contingent environment (Habermas, 1981/1984). Habermas refers to the first concept of rationality as the *cognitive-instrumental*, which performs actions that assist in the successful acceptance of privately set goals. These actions can be either instrumental or strategic.

Habermas’s second concept of rationality is based on communicative rationality, which strives for attaining mutual understanding which can be acquired through the process of agreement between communicative subjects (Habermas, 1981/1984).

Habermas’s theory of communicative action is not to be mistaken for a process that allows different people to develop a mutual understanding only through the acts of speech or that agreement will be the definite result when people interact with one another (Murphy & Fleming, 2010). Habermas asserts that for communicative action to take place, it is not necessary that only linguistic approaches are taken, but that different mediums, such as signs and symbols, can also be used to develop an understanding. The only necessary condition for communicative action to take place is that individuals need to resist any irrationality so that they can listen to others’ opinions and then come to some agreement. As a result, Habermas claims that language is a crucial tool that allows people to interact with one another and participate in rational argumentation so that they can reach a mutual understanding (Bolton, 2005).

Critical theory is thought of as an ambiguous concept by many intellectuals. The ambiguity has resulted from the combination of two different concepts, one taken from Immanuel Kant, and so associated with the Kantian
program, and the other from the conceptual world of Georg Hegel (Bubner, 1982). Similarly, critical theorists have faced controversy over their political and theoretical characteristics. However, the group of first-generation intellectuals, known as critical theorists, gained popularity during the political turmoil of the 1960s, partly for positioning themselves as theoretical agents of social change (Ingram, 2010). Furthermore, critical theorists held negative views of both capitalism and Soviet Socialism and turned their writings towards the possibility of an alternative to both, as well as a credible pathway for social development (Held, 1980). The founders of critical theory upheld various concerns associated with German Idealist thought, such as the nature of reason, truth and beauty; nevertheless, they improved the way in which these had been previously understood (Held, 1980). They achieved this by placing history at the centre of their approach to philosophy and society; in this way, rational institutions were assured of a valid, free and objective life (Held, 1980). In this context, the matter addressed by critical theorists modified its concentration on the past and incorporated future prospects. As a result, Held (1980) states:

> Each of the critical theorists maintained that although all knowledge is historically conditioned, truth claims can be rationally adjudicated independently of immediate social (i.e. class) interests. They defended the possibility of an independent moment of criticism. They also all attempted to justify critical theory on a non-objectivistic and materialistic foundations. The extension and development of the notion of critique, from a concern with the condition and limits of reason of knowledge (Kant), to a
reflection on the emergence of spirit (Hegel), and then to a focus on specific historical forms – capitalism, the exchange process (Marx) - was furthered in the work of the Frankfurt theorists and Habermas. They sought to develop a critical perspective in the discussion of all social practices. (pp. 15-16)

Critical theory took shape in Germany initially and was developed by intellectuals who belonged to the Marxist school of thought (Held, 1980). Habermas directed his attention towards the individuals of society and also to the conduct of rational debates in the public sphere (Held, 1980). By the same token, Habermas centred all his attention on the democratisation which was linked with an emphasis on political participation as the core of a democratic society and also as an essential aspect that was part of the individual’s self-development (Habermas, 1962/1989).

Habermas’s article, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (Structural Transformation) diverged from the dominant views of the Frankfurt School by including a diverse range of active and participatory bourgeois public spheres (Habermas, 1962/1989). Habermas discusses two main aspects in this work; one aspect includes the historical analysis of the bourgeois area that is followed up by the reports on the structural change in the public sphere (Habermas, 1962/1989). In this context, Habermas’s theory of the public sphere explores the popular class of the eighteenth century, especially in Great Britain, France and Germany (Habermas, 1962/1989). The central theme of Habermas’s Structural Transformation focuses on the changes observed in the public sphere
over the years in the aforementioned countries. A shift of the public sphere from the elite class to the working class allowed the private sector to take control of the public domain (Habermas, 1962/1989).

Habermas referred to this process as the re-feudalisation of the public sphere. He claims that shifts in the economy and power structures had allowed the working class to gain access to the public sphere once again (Habermas, 1962/1989). In addition, this allowed the consumers of that period to use people for their purposes, such as turning the masses into unthinking consumers, on the one hand, while, on the other, the political groups and the State tried to turn the citizens into unthinking masses. For Habermas, the public sphere is a domain that allows people to view things critically and rationally and to debate public policy (Habermas, 1962/1989). The public sphere does not necessarily have to involve face-to-face interactions, existing in different mediums, such as newspapers.

Habermas illustrates that the public sphere in its ideal form is a domain that allows private people to come together in the shape of the public expressing issues of the society with other members of the State (Habermas, 1962/1989). In this context, Habermas (1962/1989) states:

A set of basic rights concerned the sphere of the public engaged in rational-critical debate (freedom of opinion and speech, freedom of press, freedom of assembly and association, etc.) and the political function of private people in this public sphere (right of petition, equality of vote, etc.). A second set of basic rights concerned the individual’s status as a free human
being, grounded in the intimate sphere of the patriarchal conjugal family (personal freedom, inviolability of the home, etc.). (p. 83)

According to Habermas, the public sphere is part of the life-world as it provides an immediate setting for the individuals to involve themselves in interactive discussions (Keane, 1995). Therefore, Habermas states that the public sphere should not be separated from the life-world. Habermas focuses on oral biases and emphasises the importance of communication between people in the private sector (Keane, 1995). In this connection, he believes that the public sphere can be maintained through rational dialogues and debates between the members of society. In addition, the public sphere is made more effective by allowing the communities to come up with different activities, be they religious, recreational or some other activity (Calhoun, 1992).

The involvement of academic institutes in the public sphere can provide people with the opportunity to come together and share their views and debate over matters that include socio-political and economic issues (Calhoun, 1992). Interestingly, the public sphere was first institutionalised in Britain, allowing newspapers to present the views of the people on matters that involved the treatment of the Queen towards the people (Calhoun, 1992). In addition, a law was passed (the Licensing Act 1695) that allowed newspapers to discuss the Queen without censorship (Habermas, 1962/1989). Although the law was changed to allow freer discussion, there were still some strict laws maintained to remind people of the Queen’s position. Despite these laws, the public sphere became an essential enabler of rational debate among the citizens (Habermas, 1962/1989).
In *Structural Transformation*, Habermas provides a historical and sociological account of the rise of the bourgeois public sphere and its disintegration (Habermas, 1962/1989). Diverse subject matters are examined, such as law and politics, cultural history, social and economic factors, to understand the structures and functions that lie at the centre of modern society (Habermas, 1976/1991b). Habermas writes in his article that the word public and public opinion have varying meanings.

Pondering on the amount of work dedicated to critical theory, it can be said that the approach has been criticised by intellectuals across the world (Held, 1980). The focus of the critical theorists was mainly on discourses that discussed mass culture and the state (Held, 1980). Society was an integral part of critical theory as the liberation of individuals was the primary concern of the critical theorists (Held, 1980). However, the first generation of the Frankfurt School did not consider coming up with a solution for the problems faced by members of society (Held, 1980). On the contrary, they only focused on describing different ideologies and presenting a critique of the earliest notions of a Marxist perspective (Held, 1980).

To understand the responses generated by the Frankfurt School and Habermas, the approaches of Georg Lukacs and Karl Korsch are particularly useful (Held, 1980). Their attempts to address these responses led to the development of new concepts in Marxism. Lukacs and Korsch had raised questions about the dominant Marxist orthodoxies, such as the established doctrines of the Communist and Social Democratic Parties (Held, 1980). By challenging conventional belief and rethinking Marxist interpretations of
contemporary events, Lukacs and Korsch created the basis for a reexamination of Marxist theory and practice (Held, 1980). Both believed that Marx’s writings contained concepts, methods and principles which were violated by orthodox Marxist theory and both sought to elaborate and develop this dimension of Marx’s enterprise (Held, 1980).

Lukacs and Korsch considered the process of elaboration and development to require an examination of Marxist origins and perspectives, and more importantly the involvement of those thinkers who could facilitate the process of reconstruction (Bubner, 1982). Therefore, the purpose of critical theory was to analyse and expose the hiatus between the actual and the possible, between the existing order of contradictions and a potential future state (Bubner, 1982).

Marxist theory must be oriented to the development of consciousness and the promotion of active political involvement (Held, 1980). In this connection, Held (1980) states:

It will become evident in the course of what follows that critical theorists retained many of Lukacs’s concerns: the interplay between history and theory, the importance of theory as a ‘promotive factor in the development of the masses’, the relation of production and culture, the effects of reification and the way each aspect of society contains within itself, ‘the possibility of the unravelling of the social whole or totality’. (p. 22)

In spite of what critical theorists remark about Marxist theory, critical theory was similarly formulated to bring about a political revolution and change the economic situation (Alway, 1995).
According to the definition presented by Horkheimer in his essay *Traditional Critical Theory*, critical theory focuses on differences in approaches between social theories and scientific theories. Horkheimer and his associates disregarded the concept of objectivity when it came to knowledge (Held, 1980). Objectivity in knowledge was instead rooted in historical and social processes. This conception of objectivity reflects Hegel’s notions of dialectics and the Marxist theory of economy, both of which influenced the critical approach (Bubner, 1982).

In a political concept of critical theory, Habermas highlights the degeneration of the Russian revolution that turned into Stalinism. He further talks about the failure of revolution in the West and the lack of a mass proletarian revolutionary class consciousness. Alongside these issues, the constant collapse of the Marxist approach into deterministic or cultural critique are significant features of recent times (Kellner, 1990). In this connection, Habermas asserts that the occurrence of all these events demonstrates that the Marxist method is as unreliable as other conventional theories that have been utilised in the attempt to understand social movements. Such instances, according to Habermas, call for the redesigning of critical theory by assessing and evaluating the essential traditions of social thought. Habermas therefore did not limit his approach to philosophical perspectives only, but has also looked at the compelling arguments from a psychological perspective. By adding the mental aspect, Habermas sought to further the interdisciplinary nature of critical theory by integrating the
contributions of different fields of psychology, such as individual psychology and social psychology (Geuss, 1981).

In the philosophical approach towards critical theory, Habermas rejects many of the ideas of his contemporaries, such as those of Horkheimer and Adorno. According to Habermas, Adorno was of the view that the ultimate foundations for knowledge and value were unfathomable. Habermas refutes this statement, disagreeing with both Horkheimer and Adorno regarding their antipathy towards systematic thought (Cook, 2004). Instead, Habermas’s whole concept is structured around engaging and employing competing traditions of philosophy and social thought, redesigning of the foundations of social theory, and asserting the superiority of his claim over others, directly in opposition to the primary goals of the primary theorists of the Frankfurt School (Cook, 2004).

The initial controversy surrounding Habermas’s article, *Structural Transformation*, can be best perceived in the context of the work that was done in collaboration with the Institute for Social Research. Under the wings of his two seniors, Horkheimer and Adorno, Habermas learned a great deal about social research. In spite of later differences, the guidance of both Horkheimer and Adorno gave Habermas the confidence to believe in his work and to pursue it in a manner that seemed reasonable. Habermas was sufficiently inspired to begin his own research project, and he began with an investigation into how the *new public sphere* functioned, especially during the Enlightenment period and in the context of the different revolutions that were occurring across Europe at the time. He also
examined how the public arena was used for discussions and public debates (Calhoun, 1992).

Habermas formulated his study of the public sphere, based on the existing Institute’s analysis of transformation from liberal capitalist approaches of the nineteenth century to the stage where the State and other institutes of the twentieth century became instrumental. One of Habermas’s first articles provided a critical point of view on the society that had turned the masses into consumers. In *Theory and Practice*, Habermas highlights the link between the unity of both theory and practice which was central to the Marxist approach and also the critical theory of society which had moral and political dimensions (Held, 1980). Habermas maintained the unity of theory and practice central to classical Marxism and the critical theory of society, while fleshing out the moral and political dimensions of critical theory.

When Habermas began working with the Institute, his primary focus was centred on the political opinions and capabilities of students. While working on the behaviour of students and politics, Habermas stood by the principles of formal law, sovereignty, guaranteed rights and civil liberties as part of the legacy of the bourgeois society (Emden & Midgley, 2013). He sought to come up with a normative ideology based on democracy that could be applied and used as a standard for critically analysing the welfare of societies (Emden & Midgley, 2013). In this connection, Habermas was of the view that both the Frankfurt School and Marx had underestimated the significance of the principles of laws, rights and the sovereignty. He also held that both the Frankfurt School and Marx
had been inattentive to the re-democratisation of radical social theory, which was a significant task (Kellner, 2000).

Around the year, 1961, students had shown an interest in participating in the democratic conceptions about which Habermas had deep concerns. For this reason, he set himself to the task of developing theories of democratisation and political participation. To this day, Habermas’s work is still evident, especially in promoting radical democracy as a comprehensive, informed, and deliberative democratic process (Crawford, 2009).

Some of the most critical issues discussed by Adorno and Horkheimer in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* concerned the rise and domination of instrumental reason. They defined domination first as an attribute that takes place when individuals have their goals and purposes defined, ones for which they strive to work hard and succeed. The second form of domination is internal, in which individuals try to exercise controls over themselves (Held, 1980). From this definition, capitalism can be termed as a historical example of domination as it tried to dominate members of society by imposing rules on them.

The purpose of Horkheimer and Adorno’s work was not to recreate a philosophical system, but instead to create concepts that worked towards a philosophy of history. In this regard, Horkheimer and Adorno asserted that theories in general imposed themselves upon history and, by doing so, distorted it (Held, 1980). Even worse than distorting history, these philosophies tended to impose acts of severe brutality. The authors gave examples of different theories, such as Christianity, idealism and materialism, that initially worked on imparting
truth to the individuals of a society, however, were ultimately held responsible for victimising people (Braaten, 1991). These ideologies acted first as organising forces, but each eventually played a bloody role as is evident from history. In this connection, the purpose of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was not to prove what was right or what was beneficial for any society. Instead, the theory worked towards assessing impending threats of domination.

Whereas Horkheimer and Adorno sought to fulfil the research program begun by their predecessors in the Frankfurt School, Habermas sought to develop a new critical approach. He engaged different discourses such as modern philosophy and social theory and contrasted his work with that of the first generation of critical theorists who belonged to the Frankfurt School (Bernstein, 1995). As discussed previously, Habermas was opposed to the views of both Horkheimer and Adorno and believed that critical theory should be developed in a way that concentrates more on the issues of the people than only explaining why certain ideologies had been oppressive (Bernstein, 1995). In addition, Habermas believed that his project strived towards implementing a theory that was focused on society and its individual members. As a result, he considered his project to be a way to create a theory of society that carries with it a practical intention to liberate people from domination (Bubner, 1982).

For this reason, Habermas’s theory aimed to work towards understanding the social groups that are capable of changing society. In defending his theory of society, will and consciousness, Habermas was concerned with systematically defining society’s philosophical underpinnings (Bubner, 1982). To carry out this
task, he attempted to recreate some of the classical Greek philosophical works which specifically focused on the concepts of truth and virtue, facts and values and theory and practice (Bubner, 1982). Additionally, Habermas defined his project as a way to find the critical soul of science while also working towards understanding the essence of criticism (Braaten, 1991). Therefore, the practical aim of his work is directed towards a self-emancipation of the individuals from society’s domination. By evaluating the self-formative processes of humans, Habermas’s purpose is to enhance the understanding of the social groups that can change society. In this context, it can be understood that his aim at redefining critical theory lies in the course and stories of history (Braaten, 1991). By the same token, Habermas’s critical theory does not intend to find a way out of the issues that have troubled people but rather to confront them by explaining and providing a critique of ideology (Braaten, 1991).

It is safe to say that the critical theory presented by Habermas provides a diagnostic explanation, unlike the therapeutic explanation whose purpose is to provide a treatment, for social transformations (Braaten, 1991). For example, Strydom (2011) states that “in cases where critical theory does succeed and pragmatic reception results in the reorientation of action, self-transformation and social transformation, a concurrent social or collective learning process occurs which contributes to problem solving and world creation” (p. 162). Unlike the Marxist theory and Freudian theory of psychoanalysis, that offer therapeutic explanations, Habermas’s critical theory provides a diagnostic explanation for the problems that have been ailing everyone (Braaten, 1991). In this connection, the
diagnostic explanation works towards finding the causes of any crisis that has surfaced, and then working through it to find a solution (Braaten, 1991). In addition, the diagnostic explanation then is associated with the critical theory of society offered by Habermas (Braaten, 1991). In support of the correlation between the critical theory of society and the notion of diagnostic explanation, and to show its significance on society, Murphy and Fleming (2010) state:

One of Habermas’ core objectives in developing his social theory has been to rescue reason and what he considered the unfinished project of modernity from the clutches of postmodern theory, which in a curious turn of events parallels to some extent the ‘totally administered world’ view of reason adopted by Adorno and Horkheimer (1972), a view of reason itself as the core problem facing modern Western societies. (p. 5)

The events of the 1960s had a profound impact on Habermas’s thought where he based his efforts on attracting followers who sought radical democratisation of society (Kellner, 2014). Thus, Habermas’s enthusiasm facilitated an atmosphere of influential discussions related to the democratisation of the public sphere and civil society; hence, the normative dimension assisted in creating constructive discussions associated with the public sphere and democracy (Kellner, 2014).

Writing in 1995, Jay M. Bernstein regards Habermas as a spokesperson for a version of Kantian moral thought with his notion of the ideal speech situation or the unlimited communication community (Bernstein, 1995). He believed that Habermas’s perspective is Kantian and formal and it also goes through a series of
procedures which give the appearance of a thoroughly examined work (Bernstein, 1995). Another aspect that adds depth to Habermas’s work is his motive of locating communicative rationality about creating a critical theory that is entirely focused on society (Bernstein, 1995). It also presents a radical thought that centers on liberating individuals from the restraints of different institutions and working towards implementing laws that provide justice to everyone (Bernstein, 1995).

To distinguish the importance of Habermas’s critical theory, we can compare it, yet again, with that of Horkheimer and Adorno (2002). Habermas perceives critical theory in the form of a human society wherein liberties and demands of all individuals are being provided, met and considered indispensable. Furthermore, critical theory can be described as an emancipatory revolution, since it takes the freedom and rationale of society into a high degree of contemplation, where the demands of all members of society are freely painstaking and well-kept (Joll, 2010). These two definitions may advance the development of contemporary theories necessary to help thinkers understand the importance of socio-political matters away from present-day capitalist society, via knowing through critical reflection and engagement, or praxis that potentially visualises and contests certain educational philosophies such as pedagogy (Lovat, 2013a). In other words, praxis means a reflective practice of self-knowing that can be accomplished by implementing a critical or self-reflective approach for creating pragmatic actions to transform self and community (Lovat, 2005). This can be of significant value, especially when it has been emphasised that there is a necessity to implement
contemporary educational frameworks, since the current educational standards across the world tend to be repetitive and obsolete (Fischetti, 2016).

2.2.1.1 The Rise of Habermas’s Critical Theory

In exploring critical theory, Held (1980) asserts the theory became popular amongst those who sought to comprehend the formation and self-understanding of the political movement known as the New Left in the 1960s and 1970s, in their proposition to stand against imperialism, the private seizure of rare resources, and the suppression of personal initiatives of society’s members. Additionally, during the 1960s and 1970s, critical theorists, including Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas utilised a rare approach in which the theorists accentuated their role in investigating socio-political affairs (Held, 1980). As a result, the way critical theory is understood among followers and members of the Frankfurt School, including Max Horkheimer, Friedrich Pollock and Theodore Adorno, does not necessarily point to a total agreement on the meaning of thoughts and interpretations. On the contrary, the vast majority of critical theorists believe that despite the notion whereby knowledge can be historically characterised, truth claims can be disputed based on extant social interests (Held, 1980). In this regard, Habermas was keen to create a unique theoretical platform that could bring various schools of thought together, including several traditions of the linguistic and scientific Anglo-American philosophies to extend the traditional circle of rational exploration and transformation (Held, 1980).

This way of knowing has led certain critical theorists, including Habermas, to believe that investigating modern socio-political matters promotes criticism of
ideology and calls for a rationale and self-determining politics away from dictatorial surveillance and influence (Held, 1980). Moreover, MacKendrick (2008) defines Habermas’s critical theory as a theory in which the analysis of logical and informative affairs from a social theoretical viewpoint is persistent, whereas the cognitive and standard principles of vision are protected through a constant defence, to an extent that reflects on the potential of religion within contemporary living standards. In his critical theory, Habermas stresses the importance of rectifying any form of justification related to specific aspects of his theory when necessary (MacKendrick, 2008). Additionally, Habermas’s work rejuvenates critique and rational thinking, and places them at the heart of his critical theory (Freundlieb, Hudson & Rundell, 2004). Thus, when social actors interact and engage in mutual dialogues, reflecting upon Habermas’s work when discussing, agreeing or disagreeing, this indeed facilitates the platforms necessary for self-criticism and rational reflection which creates better understanding and effective communication (Freundlieb, et al., 2004). In this context, through Habermas’s approach, the application of critical thinking and the use of rationality creates reflective platforms for thinkers to pragmatically analyse various socio-political dilemmas for enhanced dynamic conclusions.

According to Kellner (1990), the Frankfurt School produced Habermas’s critical theory which included the intellectual face of Marxism at a time when changing the economic circumstances in Germany was surrounded by many restraints such as the emergence of fascism (as cited in Murphy & Fleming, 2010). Additionally, Cohen and Arato (1992) accentuate that Habermas describes
modernity in his critical theory as an inadequate scheme that subsequently needs further solidification, particularly around notions pertinent to current democratic principles (as cited in Murphy & Fleming, 2010). Hence, Habermas’s description has contributed towards designating his political orientation as a deep-seated democrat (as cited in Murphy & Fleming, 2010). His ambitions in creating his critical theory were not about reinstating the State and market into daily lived experiences, but rather to protect and integrate the lived experiences of those democratic principles, ethics and compassion, into the system of the State and its governance, and potentially obstruct the potential for colonisation from more powerful external forces.

Habermas (1992/1996) stresses an equally important manifestation in his theory of the significant duty of civil society. He describes this as “composed of those more or less spontaneously emergent associations, organisations and movements that, attuned to how societal problems resonate in the private public sphere, distil and transmit such reactions in amplified form to the public sphere” (p. 367). Habermas’s concept of public sphere is defined by Jacobson, Chen and Meng, (2017) as a platform whereupon civilians have the opportunity to interact, discuss and debate socio-political and religious affairs as well as any emerging collective topics. In this connection, Habermas’s admiration of the concept of public sphere is generated at many levels, including those of democratic politics, equality, liberty, rationality and reality, and being a platform for the moral and epistemic ethics that preserve democracy. In other words, the responsibility of civil society to preserve a public sphere for discourse purposes creates learning
platforms that enhance democratic knowledge, whereby democracy is involved in the work of individuals who seek a social discourse and examine the implications in order to generate socio-political responses (Murphy & Fleming, 2010). To illustrate further, Murphy and Fleming (2010) state:

The public sphere is an important pedagogical site for democratic learning, where democracy as a social movement is embedded in an ongoing effort of individuals to produce a social discourse and to ponder the implications of such a discourse for social or political action. (p. 8)

This demonstrates that Habermas based his entire concentration on elaborating that democratisation provides the empirical focus for all political association and that this core for a proper democratic society should similarly serve as an essential element for any individual’s self-development process (Kellner, 2000).

Alway (1995) believes that critical theory is perceived as an assembly of social thought, whereby it responds to the interpretations of Marxism whilst, at the same time, being derived from it. In this context, Habermas concentrated on the association between intellectuals and public opinion, in which he defies the growing inconsistency directed towards expert cultures and rational understanding (Corchia, 2013). Furthermore, Habermas justifies his perception through illustrating that the destructive impact on communicative praxis expands in the circumstances whereby expert cultures are subsequently segregated (Corchia, 2013). Habermas emphasises the significance of releasing the human cognitive
interest from any form of captivity, to encourage a rational understanding of facts in various contexts (Lovat, 2004).

Lovat (2004) asserts that the type of knowing that is derived from responding to the human cognitive interest to be emancipated in one’s knowing is described as a critical or self-reflective way of knowing, and that is in line with the belief that humans want to know that what they believe they know is the truth, freed from subjugation by external powerful forces or internal biases and blindspots. However, it remains insufficient to exclusively rely on Habermas’s way of knowing through human cognitive interest to understand meaning as a result of inter-subjectivity alone, or even combined with knowing through mystical assumptions, or myths. This is because knowing via either ontology or empiricism tends to deceive the knower as both ways concentrate on the givens of human experience which technically measure the assertive visualisations of the truth, and consequently explore the suitable response to that truth. Lovat describes Habermas’s form of understanding meaning through inter-subjectivity as a historical hermeneutic or, in other words, the outcome of engaging humans in dialogue and understanding the associated results of that engagement. This interpretation of Habermas’s critical theory guides the study to promote and implement what Habermas describes as praxis for all knowledge seekers, whilst identifying the truth through engaging with the whole person, rather than depending solely on cognitive action or even inter-subjective experience (Lovat, 2004).
This method of grasping truth can be illustrated as a reflection of knowledge in which the human cognitive interest, along with inter-subjectivity, is integrated with the practicality of *praxis*. This is essential to the formation of an authority that can generate ways of knowing and experience the truth through comprehending the knower, in order that the knower becomes a component part of ascertaining the truth. In a word, *there is no knowing without knowing the knower, who is oneself*. To demonstrate further, people’s forms of knowing do not necessarily need to be restricted to the linear nature of empirical or analytic knowing, nor limited to the communicativeness around historical or hermeneutic knowing. Indeed, both of these can be limited by the *already known*, the conventions of knowing. Thus, for the cognitive interest to be emancipated, this requires people to be able to think freely and move away from any forms of restraint that may impact on their rational thinking. This is the knowing that leads to *praxis*, or practical actions to ultimately challenge socio-political affairs and create reforms (Lovat, 2004).

2.2.2 Habermas’s Theory of Communicative Action

In addition to Habermas’s critical theory, this study utilises Habermas’s theory of communicative action which emphasises the importance of rationality concerning communication between persons (Schaefer, Heinze, Rotte, & Denke, 2013). This is in addition to authentic knowledge derived from the self-reflective knower who is characterised by communicative amplitude and associated action (Lovat, 2013a). Moreover, Habermas illustrates that utilising approaches where critical and self-reflective philosophies are implemented can lead to a production
of freedom and the amplification of grasped knowledge, in other words increasing the ability to effectively communicate and enhancing communicative actions (Lovat, Dally, Clement & Toomey, 2011).

There are three correlative matters associated with Habermas’s theory of communicative action. First, is the production of a modern form of rationality that is free from the captivity of the subjectivist and individualist statements related to modern philosophy and social theory. Second, concerns the attempt to structure two variations of society, entailing assimilation of lived experience and systemic patterns. Finally, the third, involves forming a critical theory of modernity that considers examinations that advocate for a redirection of the concept of enlightenment, rather than neglecting it (Habermas, 1981/1984).

Habermas compiled these correlative matters in a new technique that contains theoretical constructions along with historical reconstructions of the notions of classical social theorists (Habermas, 1981, 1984). Additionally, he emphasises the significant essence of language that possesses better communication and leads to mutual understanding, whereby topics for discussion begin by knowing a language. The ability to communicate is not tied to, or limited by creating grammatically correct sentences, but rather the ability to mutually interact and engage in conversations where people’s emotions, targets and intentions can be freely expressed and understood by the members involved in those conversations. Hence, it goes without saying that the power of language exceeds people’s expectations when bridging barriers of language and culture, as
well as socio-political and religious variations. This is especially of value in the pluralist society in which we live (Habermas, 1981, 1984).

The shortcomings of utilising instrumentalist conceptions of rationality and action lie in its incapacity to demonstrate the empirical regularities presented in social interaction (Heath, 2003). According to Heath (2003), this is because instrumental action does not provide the required adhesive substance to hold together stable human associations.

2.2.3 Research Procedures

To accomplish the objectives of this dissertation, the following research procedures will be observed. Regarding the first aim that targets notions of how political Islam is viewed, Habermas’s descriptive, interpretive and critically self-reflective methods of analysis, tied to his ways of knowing, are applied. The dissertation explores and interprets Habermas’s epistemological insights against the relevant political events and the literature directed to interpreting them. The exploration and interpretation of Habermas’s epistemological insights strengthens the core value of this study, as it reveals how Habermas might analyse the historical context. In particular, an application of his insights to interpret political Islam, and how these interpretations may help to inform educators and enhance the intended diplomatic training program, will be central to the thesis.

The correlation of Habermas’s theories, and his accentuation of the way the human mind works, is also analysed and utilised in this dissertation. This prompts the exigency of acknowledging all the facts and figures related to political Islam and the attitudes of Western foreign policies towards it as well. This exigency also
supports the empirical and analytic way of knowing in order to effectively comprehend the issue at hand. Therefore, this dissertation examines and analyses the epistemology of Habermas, especially his methods of challenging positivist notions of power, knowledge and being, as well as his critical theory (ways of knowing) and the theory of communicative action in order to achieve the intended objectives (see section 1.2). Habermas’s notions can deepen understanding of our research in various areas of education, including Arab-West international relations, as well as offering platforms for holistic learning. For this reason, the dissertation presents Habermas’s epistemology as the central methodological tool, that is utilised to analyse relevant literature and events. Finally, the procedures outline the Habermasian descriptive, interpretive and critically self-reflective ways of knowing that guide the analysis and interpretations throughout the dissertation, proceeding to collectively apply the analysis and interpretations into the reading, and coverage of the various phases of the literature review (fields of analysis) at each step.

2.2.4 Why Habermas’s Critical Theory and the Theory of Communicative Action?

Habermas’s work and influence are utilised and seen in various fields of knowledge, including philosophy, science subjects, education, politics, psychology, sociology and many other fields. In addition, Habermas’s work reflects an in-depth analysis of theories directed towards society and knowledge and shows a close association with the work of the Frankfurt School. This latter work is closely related to the theories presented by the Marxist school of thought.
In this regard, Habermas was devoted to examining the rule of law in politics, specifically the one that was prevalent in Germany. His work is also concerned with the concept of rationality whilst focusing on the relationship of rationality with communication.

Habermas’s enthusiasm for the idea of morality associated with the theory of rationalisation, is echoed in his theories of rationality and communicative action. His awareness of morality is also reflective of his childhood and upbringing in an era of National Socialism in Germany (Hamzaj, 2015). As a demonstration, during this time, Habermas was not permitted to leave his birthplace as his predecessors had while, on the other hand, the first generation of the Frankfurt School had the freedom to leave Germany (Terry, 1997). For this reason, Habermas’s work tends to reflect the history of Germany and attempts to conserve what he valued about the German Enlightenment Project (Terry, 1997).

To illustrate this point further, the time during which Habermas was growing up, the German government had been suppressing the rights of its people, rendering them devoid of any free will and imposing their own rules on the citizens. Germany was enveloped in propaganda that was spreading lies, and distorted ideologies which were restricting people from living their life the way they wanted (Terry, 1997). Additionally, the treatment of the Nazi leadership has left its impact on many Germans, and Habermas’s works are an example of that impact. In this connection, Habermas refers to the notions of freedom, truth and rationality through concepts which highlight the impact of Nazi rule on Germany during the time he was growing up. Additionally, the oppression and propaganda
of 1933-1945 turned Habermas into the man he is now, willing to fight for the rights of fellow human beings and urging people to raise their voices and express their concerns in matters of public interest (Terry, 1997). Beyond the oppressive rule of the German government on its people, Habermas also provided evidence of policies concerned with the field of education. During the Nazi rule, works of many influential writers had been banned in Germany, including those of Marx and Freud (Terry, 1997). Around the middle of the 1950s, Habermas took on the field of journalism which provided him with the opportunity to pose questions and initiate debates about important matters that required immediate attention (Terry, 1997). In this regard, it is important to indicate that Habermas’s participation in debates continues to the present day, and he has been voicing the concerns of people on various matters that have so often been neglected by governments.

Habermas has contributed significantly to German newspapers, magazines and periodicals (Terry, 1997). His work has also been recognised and is influential outside German-speaking countries since he has always been criticising the way the Nazi rule and the German government had suppressed the rights of the people and brainwashed them into believing in distorted ideologies (Terry, 1997).

In Habermas’s publication *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968), mass social delusion and unthinkable conformity to rigid patterns of authority are social neuroses grounded in the societal repression of basic instincts that aim at individual and social fulfilment. As Habermas became more convinced of the importance of unlimited and undistorted communication in fulfilling emancipation from ideological delusions, he also became more committed to the idea of an open
and democratic society (Kellner, 2014). By 1970, Habermas’s belief that unlimited and undistorted communication was essential to both political action and knowledge led him to reconsider his previous knowledge centred conception of critical theory in favour of one founded on a theory of communicative action. From this point on, Habermas increasingly focused his attention on linguistics, philosophy of language, and the relationship between moral development and the acquisition of intellectual communicative competence.

According to Forster (2016), educational researchers in the field of multidisciplinary humanities are under increasing pressure to possess a great deal of understanding and application of social theories in order to construct contemporary educational theories. To accomplish this, there should be a cognitive ability and eagerness that facilitate educational platforms, along with an understanding of the philosophies and analysis of certain influential educational protagonists. Therefore, Habermas’s interactive objectives and rational measures regarding various global topics, including political democracy, international politics, mass culture, cultural diversity, and nationalistic encounters are pivotal for this dissertation as they provide an enduring and global reading of socio-political history (Corchia, 2013). Furthermore, what distinguishes Habermas in his critical theory from other philosophers and sociologists, such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, is his enthusiasm and dedication towards the concrete institutional structure of democratic society, where institutions strive to painstakingly defend people from falling into the political extremism and the desolation of prosperous capitalist economy (Finlayson, 2005).
As a sociologist and philosopher, Habermas has frequently questioned socio-political policies (Olafson, 1990). Habermas’s early writings were described as anti-positivistic, which is also referred to as interpretive or negativism (Olafson, 1990). This is perhaps due to the nature of common positivist perceptions in which positivists tend to struggle with grasping the different variations and complexities of socio-behavioural phenomena (Rodwell, 1987). What is more contradictory to Habermas’s views on knowledge acquisition and the way the human mind can work through self-reflection, is that logical positivism affirms that facts are conclusive and that the factual knowledge can only be gained through scientific knowledge, whilst all other forms of knowledge grasping are unnecessary, and therefore senseless (Lovat, 2013a).

In challenging logical positivism, Ferre (1961) considers we interpret facts according to the way it is understood. Ferre’s perspective on facts shows that they can be discernible and assessable, which essentially parallels with theories. Logical positivists instead propose that facts are decisive and irreplaceable. Such a perspective tends to minimise the ability to critically analyse socio-political affairs. Echoing this, Lovat (2013a) emphasises that pursuing knowledge depends on the subjectivity of the individual who seeks comprehension and visualisation. There is some sort of limitation surrounding the way knowledge is grasped in logical positivism, and that limitation lies within its shortcomings in constructing all forms of knowledge based on a few examples. Hence, it can be stated that understanding how religious affairs operate in general, and political Islam in particular, requires an analytical and comprehensive method of gathering knowledge prior to
constructing conclusions. In this light, Habermas’s understanding of knowledge, which is based on a series of epistemological and cognitive interests related to the way the human mind functions, has potential to add to the significance of this dissertation and its ambitions.

There is a considerable amount of criticism of Habermas’s theory of communicative action. This criticism arises from two main aspects, including the theory’s applicability to non-Western societies as well as its compatibility with sensitive cultural practices and variations (Escobar, 2011; Gunaratne, 2006; Rasmussen, 1982). Jacobson et al. (2017) illustrate that Habermas’s theory of communicative action has been criticised for being individualistic, culturally ethnocentric and inadequate when applied globally. Additionally, various essential concepts, theories, and critiques in the late 20th century have been derived from Habermas’s works on social psychology. Therefore, Habermas’s concept of social psychology has been the centre of criticism as the critics continue to debate over communicative tension that is central to his theory.

Habermas has also faced critique of his work as it was based on the importance of language and communicative action (Bolton, 2005). The critics were of the view that the concept of communicative action could not be trusted as an approach that could call for rational discussions among people to resolve significant issues and international conflicts. However, despite the critique, Habermas continued to expand on his concept of communicative action to assess human interests. As a result, other fields of study have benefited significantly from the concepts presented by Habermas (Bolton, 2005). In this context, it can be
understood that the purpose of creating Habermas’s theory of communicative action rests heavily on how people look at their societal norms that can sometimes be extreme and cannot be applied entirely to every individual (Bolton, 2005).

Habermas has been criticised by other intellectual groups such as feminists, Marxists and the race theorists for not giving importance to socialism and entirely discarding it for communicative action. The intellectual groups were of the view that Habermas had disregarded social issues that involved injustice and oppression for something like the rational discussion in public spheres (Jovchelovitch, 2001). Related to this is Habermas’s revision of critical theory drew criticism from internal and external factors, including that his substitution of one aspect of the apolitical with a different aspect, and hence, Habermas is criticised for not being sufficiently political, and for centralising the notion of consensus in his democratic perceptions, in which it is claimed that he tried to expel or transcend politics (Chambers, 2004). Moreover, Fraser (1991) claims that Habermas’s critical theory is in fact uncritical, and that is due to not being in line with women’s aspirations and struggles, particularly when social criticism is most concerned (As cited in Ackerly, 2000). Nevertheless, this dissertation challenges such forms of criticism through applying Habermas’s critical theory and the theory of communicative action on the Arab Muslim domain, and illustrating the applicability and adequacy of both theories on non-Western societies.

3.1 Overview

This chapter concentrates on five primary fields of analysis that will be the subject of comprehensive outline and analysis, employing Habermas’s critical theory and theory of communicative action. The analysis will include his descriptive, interpretive and critically self-reflective insights against relevant socio-political events and the literature directed towards interpreting them.

The first field starts with addressing various important historical and current socio-political and regional challenges that particularly concern the Arab nations in the MENA region. In doing so, the study will conduct a preliminary exploration of the nature of these socio-political and regional challenges. The remainder of the chapter will then concentrate on Western intervention and geo-political ambitions, and the consequences of certain political and military affairs that gripped the MENA region.

Following this, the second field of analysis addresses the history of political Islam in the MENA region and the factors that have contributed towards its emergence. This will be followed by reviewing the history of the MB and its impact during and post the Arab Spring.

The third field of analysis concerns the reconciliation and integration of Arab-West international relations. This will be discussed along with Habermas’s insights as well as contemporary Islamic thought. Following this, attention will be
directed towards the interpretation of social realities whilst applying various Habermasian notions to these realities.

The fourth field of analysis addresses religious based knowledge and proven historical Islamic thought on international relations. Special attention will be paid to the Arab-Islamic civilisation of Al-Andalus and the impact of contemporary Islamic agency on international relations.

The fifth field of analysis concentrates on Western foreign policies, ramifications on the MENA region, and emphasises the necessity for a new diplomatic training program for Western diplomats and politicians.

3.2 The Intransigent Socio-Political and Regional Challenges of Arab Nations and the Western Intervention in the MENA Region

Socio-political and regional conflicts among rivals in the MENA region, especially among the Arab nations, are frequently highlighted in the mainstream media when discussing topics such as counter-terrorism, extremism and international security, containing Iran, the security of Israel, and the free international transportation of oil (Alghunaim, 2014). Differences between the various socio-political and religious ideologies in the region play a crucial role in fuelling the conflicts among opponents in the MENA region. Some of these ideologies and notions call for freedom, social justice and democracy, while others choose violence, extremism and various forms of subjugation to achieve their socio-political and religious agendas (Shokri, 2016).

If we are to objectively investigate and analyse the historical socio-political and regional challenges in the MENA region and ultimately seek political
resolutions, it is critical to address the unresolved Arab-Israeli conflict. In this regard, seeking political resolutions for the intransient socio-political and regional challenges in the MENA region is pivotal, and begins with illustrating the roots of these challenges before recreating pragmatic resolutions that could potentially dissolve these challenges. Differing interpretations of the socio-political issues in the MENA region, especially among the Arab nations, along with identifying the problems related to involvement of Western nations, are of value to this dissertation in order to see the full picture and pinpoint the blindspots and various biases that invariably sit at the heart of such an intransient dispute. To accomplish this is a complex undertaking that comprises event and historical analysis, pragmatic appraisals and critical reflection and engagement, drawing predominantly on Habermas’s critical theory and the theory of communicative action, along with various measures of self-critique or self-reflectivity.

### 3.2.1 The Unceasing Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

This chapter argues that the longstanding Israeli-Palestinian conflict sits at the heart of the intransient issues facing the MENA region, particularly when the efforts to revive peace, stability and harmony entail the strengthening of Arab-West international relations. There is no shortage of disagreement regarding the numerous factors that place the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the mainstream media (Jaeger, Klor, Miaari, & Paserman, 2012). This is due to the global and socio-political implications of this conflict on foreign policies, the ongoing involvement of civilians and, most importantly, the endless outcomes that generate an uncontrollable rise of aggression, extremism, terrorism and ultimately the loss
of lives. Accordingly, the original factors that led to the creation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remain evident in the current socio-political affairs of the MENA region. These factors play a role in influencing the way Arabs perceive the Western world and their foreign policies as well as impacting on the future of Arab-West international relations.

Many political initiatives and research studies have been conducted to illustrate the implications of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict globally. However, the outcomes of these initiatives and studies tend to lack pragmatic strategies that could bridge the gap between the lopsided rivals. Therefore, the conflict between the Palestinian people and the Israelis continues to worsen over time, without reaching a long-term vision or agreement that could help in stabilising the MENA region, particularly the Arab nations. In this context, authors have described the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an intractable one that constitutes the straw that broke the camel’s back (Vered & Bar-Tal, 2014), and that the heavy implications of this conflict remain as crucial factors that need to be thoroughly addressed. In this connection, Ahmad (1990) believes that the negative implications of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the entire MENA region is due to Israel denying the legitimacy of the Palestinian people’s right to apply self-determination. Hence, to isolate the origins of this conflict and to further understand the Arab tendency in decrying certain Western foreign policies, this dissertation addresses pivotal socio-political and religious events that occurred from the 1840s onwards.
3.2.1.1 The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Dilemmas

From the 1840s onwards until the beginning of the 20th century, the British Empire strengthened its role and presence in the MENA region (Raymond, 2003), including conquering Egypt in 1875. Once accomplished, the British provided extra support and safeguarded European Jews who wanted to escape communism and migrate to Palestine (Criollo, 2010). In this regard, the border between Palestine and Sinai in Egypt became a vital strategic interest for the British who looked to contain the vast Ottoman investments in southern Palestine (Ben-Bassat & Ben-Artzi, 2015).

Britain was eager to maintain its presence and preserve its interests in Egypt and, for this reason, the British authorities expressed serious opposition to the Ottoman administration (Özyüksel, 2016). In this context, Fantauzzo (2015) argues that the British authorities represented by soldiers sought to free the Palestinians from Ottoman oppression and to spread liberty and democracy for a better Palestine, although under British rule. However, contrary to Fantauzzo’s perspective is the current devastating condition under which the Palestinians live and struggle on a daily basis, ranging from the extensive Israeli checkpoints to the limitation of basic needs imposed in the Gaza strip, including water and electricity. Therefore, Fantauzzo’s perspective tends to be impractical and lacks a pragmatic political resolution, as seen in the growing hardships and complications of the Palestinian cause and its implications globally.

Ben-Dor (2007) emphasises the appalling impact of the Israeli colonisation of Palestinian lands, in which he describes it as a deliberately planned ethnic
cleansing strategy targeting the Palestinian people and strengthening the foundational basis of Israel as a newly established Jewish state. Ben-Dor states that the amount of daily violations of human rights committed by the Israeli forces against the Palestinians illustrates the bigger picture of the ongoing Palestinian struggle.

Other events worth noting include the establishment of the Zionist colonial project in the 1880s (Criollo, 2010) and the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence from 14 July 1915 to 30 January 1916 (Charlwood, 2015), the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement between Great Britain and France in 1916 (Dolev, 2007) and the Balfour Declaration in November, 1917 (Cohen, 2014). These political orientations constituted what was believed to be a conflicting British foreign policy approach, but were in fact executed to fortify Britain’s allies and increase British influence and power in the MENA region (Baxter & Akbarzadeh, 2008).

Baxter and Akbarzadeh (2008) consider that the Arabs had a different understanding of British foreign policies and grasped them from the perspective of a long-term Western intervention and domination over the MENA region. In the early 20th century, the United States (U.S.) was not closely involved, unlike today, and had no influential strategies to play in the British colonial divisions. However, the U.S. fascination with the MENA region began to take place in the 1930s after the discovery of oil reserves in Saudi Arabia by American geologists (Jones, 2012). Furthermore, the U.S. preference concentrated on the notion of self-determination for colonised nations, prior to switching to self-interested policies.
and later intervening directly in the political affairs of MENA’s region (Baxter & Akbarzadeh, 2008).

The shift in U.S. foreign policies had guaranteed a place for the U.S. in the political and international relations setting. This transition has prompted social commentators such as Khalil (2014) to acknowledge the direct or indirect impact of the U.S. over foreign policies and international relations, as well as the socio-political status of nations worldwide. Khalil also articulates the view that the contemporary Middle East is in technical terms a production of British-American cooperations that are based on shared interests and socio-political ideologies.

Along the same lines, Baxter and Akbarzadeh (2008) believe that the fall of the long-ruling Ottoman Empire that led the majority of Arab nations in the MENA region up until the early 20th century also contributed to the emergence of newly established Arab states under British control during that time.

The Ottoman Empire’s lengthy rule of 600 years consolidated itself in the region of Anatolia in modern Turkey (Mather, 2014; Uyar, 2015). Additionally, the Ottoman Empire structured its authority over the MENA region as an Islamic Caliphate, and throughout its culmination, the Ottoman Empire had enjoyed a great deal of land control in both the MENA region and Europe as well (Uyar, 2015). However, its downturn took place in the late 17th century and, by the beginning of the 20th century, its vast territorial control began to diminish (Garfinkle, 2016). Furthermore, the Ottoman Empire was later involuntarily compelled to more closely ally with Germany, fearing the rise of Russia’s regional agendas in the Balkans, the French rise in North Africa, the British in Egypt and
Arabia, and the immediate benefits that resulted from German military support (Aksakal, 2011; McMeekin, 2010).

The final Ottoman Emperor, Sultan Abdul Hamid II, allied himself with the Germans in World War I (WWI), and conducted treaties with them accordingly in October 1914 (Aksakal, 2011). This was in spite of the desire of the last German Emperor and the King of Prussia, Kaiser Wilhelm, to spread German influence among Muslims in the Near East (McMeekin, 2010). This alliance between the Ottomans and Germany resulted in halting the progress of the Ottoman Empire’s power over parts of Europe, let alone the Sykes-Picot Agreement that shattered the Ottoman’s control of regions in Western Asia as well. Consequently, the Ottoman territories were depleted and split among the rivals during that era, the main rivals being Britain and France respectively (Herwig, 2012).

An equally important aspect that contributed to the decline of the Ottoman Empire was the high political intensity that mounted against it from both within and from the outside as well. This was presented by the removal of Selim III by Mustafa IV at the end of the 18th century and the entanglement in wars with the Russians during the 18th century (Mather, 2014). At the same time, the British authorities and armed forces were keen to strengthen their presence and control over the MENA region as the geographical and historical significance of the region was in their sight (Ortega, 2012). The British knew that in order to gain power over the region without a great deal of resistance, their priority must be to weaken the Ottoman Empire through regional powers and tribal Arab leaders (Mather, 2014).
To analyse the context of British approaches towards the Arabs according to how Habermas might read such a historical period in focus, it can be stated that the concepts of a rational human society and mutual understanding in Habermas’s critical theory tend to have been overlooked to a large extent by the British authority. According to Habermas’s critical theory and the emphasis on shielding human society, as illustrated by Horkheimer and Adorno (2002), it can be understood that the British socio-political deficiencies began by overlooking the core meaning of human society in dealing with Arab Muslims in the MENA region. Additionally, the liberties and socio-political demands of all individuals were not taken into consideration, nor considered to be of high significance according to Habermas’s concepts. Since the regional conflicts in the MENA region involved self-awareness and an understanding of the consequences for all political agencies negotiating during that time, it can be clearly illustrated that a lack of rationality in the exercised British mutual communication strategies was evident. This lack of rationality can be attributed to the British long-term geo-strategic and political planning to protect its wide range interest in the MENA region, regardless of other outcomes concerning the Arabs.

According to Habermas’s work on effective reciprocal communication, the theory of communicative action provides integrative perspectives on resolving political speech in the public sphere, addressing various aspects of social historical change, and prompting rationality (Habermas, 1962/1989). The theory of communicative action applauds the exchange of good reason through shared negotiations in order to reach mutual understanding that is capable of considering
various themes of discussion, as well as responding accordingly (Habermas, 1976/1991b; Habermas, 1981/1984). In support of the exchange of good reason through shared negotiations, Habermas (1981/1984) states:

In each of these dimensions we are constantly making claims, even if usually only implicitly, concerning the validity of what we are saying, implying, or presupposing—claims, for instance, regarding the truth of what we say in relation to the objective world; or claims concerning the Tightness, appropriateness, or legitimacy of our speech acts in relation to the shared values and norms of our social lifeworld; or claims to sincerity or authenticity in regard to the manifest expressions of our intentions and feelings. Naturally, claims of these sorts can be contested and criticized, defended and revised. There are any number of ways of settling disputed claims—for example, by appeal to authority, to tradition or to brute force. One way, the giving of reasons-for and reasons-against has traditionally been regarded as fundamental to the idea of rationality. (p. x)

These aspects of Habermas’s work present the theory of communicative action as a relative component to reinforcing the significance of human interaction, rationality and mutual understanding as bridges to consolidate Arab-West international relations, particularly when political reform is required. However, such methods of effective communication, as illustrated by Habermas, were not taken into consideration in a way that facilitates constructive approaches in comprehending the demands of Arabs and their geo-political and religious perspectives.
Although the Ottoman Empire centralised itself with an Islamic legitimacy, the Arab tribal leaders saw it as a non-Arab governing power. Hence, Britain took advantage of that Arab expectation, and prompted forms of anti-Ottoman insurgencies among Arab leaders and tribes through advocating Arab nationalism and self-determination respectively (Friedman, 1970; Mather, 2014). Conspicuously, the British authority appears to have utilised counterproductive socio-political approaches instead of promoting pragmatic actions that could ultimately transform the Arab Muslim communities via knowing through critical reflection and engagement, or *praxis*, that potentially visualises and contests certain educational aspects, including the socio-political ambitions of the Arab Muslims in the MENA region. To demonstrate the effectiveness of critical or self-reflective knowing, Lovat (2005) states:

Knowing facts and figures (the "empirical-analytic") is important, as is the knowing of communication and meaning-making (the "historical-hermeneutic"), but the knowing that most truly marks out human intellectual endeavor and has the capacity to transform self and community is critical or self-reflective knowing. This is a profound knowing of self that issues in *praxis*, practical action for change. In a word, one cannot know in this profound sense without being changed. It is through the process of coming to know self, invariably entailing an agonizing struggle, that one gradually strips away the inherited knowledge, the familial and cultural baggage, and the ignorance that is so often the source of inter-cultural misunderstanding, bigotry, hatred, and violence. (p. 39)
In other words, one can visualise the positive role and implication of such a reflective way of knowing, especially when applied to communities, as Habermas’s notions tend to challenge socio-political figures and encourage them to acquire forms of self-reflective knowing in order to transform both the self and community. This is also to ensure the acquisition of a rational understanding and potentially reduce cultural apprehensions. Considering the history of the MENA region, British tactics would have been more effective at safeguarding the region, if an awareness of the concepts of self-knowing were evident. This could have created a better understanding of Arabs as well as the circumstances surrounding the British involvement in the socio-political sphere of the MENA region (Lovat, 2005, 2013a).

Habermas’s critical theory offers value here as it takes into consideration the significance of comprehending the formation and self-understanding of political agendas, in this case the Arab cause. Held (1980) considers Habermas’s critical theory to have played a significant role in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly when it was utilised by critical theorists as an attempt to understand the formation of the political movement known as the New Left during that period. For example, Held (1980) highlights that:

Critical theory became a key element in the formation and self-understanding of the New Left. Many of those committed to new radical protest movements – to the struggles against imperialism, the private appropriation of scarce resources and the many constraints on personal initiative – found in the works of this ‘school’ an intriguing interpretation.
of Marxist theory and an emphasis on issues and problems (mass culture, for instance, or the family and sexuality) which had rarely been explored by more orthodox approaches to Marxism. (p. 13)

In considering the notion of self-understanding, it is important to demonstrate that modern Arab perspectives are deeply affected by the history of Ottoman rule, followed by the British and American intervention in the MENA region. For this reason, Habermas’s critical theory can lead to a better understanding of these modern Arab perspectives and, in doing so provide an emancipatory platform needed for effective engagement. Applying Habermas’s critical theory to Arab Muslims as a society, whilst considering their freedom and socio-political interests, leads to various geo-political, social and religious advantages. According to Joll (2010), critical theory is a liberating source of knowledge, where it can be effectively utilised to preserve the rationale of individuals and society. However, it can be argued that the lack of effective communication, critical reflection, and pragmatic engagement that involve all members of society led to fragile Arab-Western dialogues, at times where both parties most needed to comprehend each other’s thoughts, interpretations and traditions.

According to the importance of adopting rational practices in Habermas’s theory of communicative action, it has been claimed that communicative and entirely rational societies do not exist. Jacobson et al. (2017) assert that there is an increase in popularity to utilise communicative practices among societies over the past few centuries. Arguably, Arab tribes engaged in alternative approaches to the
effective communicative practices during British occupation of Arab lands and sought to utilise the convoluted political initiative in the MENA region by corroborating the British political and regional control initiatives. Other Arab nationalists expressed their inclinations to cooperate with Germany in order to achieve a realistic self-rule (Mather, 2014). In this context, Held (1980) emphasises the role of Habermas’s critical theory that calls for better communication techniques along with effective engagement or *praxis* to strengthen the socio-political learning platforms for further constructive knowledge and productive outcomes. Additionally, in finding common values and norms in rational discussions, Englund (2010) states:

> Deliberative communication may be understood as communication in which different opinions and values can be brought face to face, with an endeavor to ensure that each individual takes a stand by listening, deliberating, seeking arguments and evaluating, while at the same time there is a collective effort to find values and norms that everyone can agree upon. (p. 24)

Considering these aspects of effective communication and discussion, it is of significance to indicate that Arabs themselves had no inclination to enhance their exploration of knowledge or transform traditions by involving various schools of thought and critical thinking that could potentially lead to criticising ideologies and self-determining politics away from censorships. In other words, there were no signs of the Arab ability to work around the idea of bringing various perspectives of socio-political affairs through critical reflection and engagement.
This can be seen through the responses of the Hashemite family (the current rulers of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan) represented by Sharif Hussein Ibn Ali Al-Hashimi who conducted diplomatic and political conventions that aligned with the British geo-strategic plans, relying on his family’s reputation for being a descendant of the Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him), as well as their historical leading legitimacy in the Arabian Peninsula (Alangari, 2012; Bowden, 2015; Kitching, 2015). Alangari (2012) contradicts this, and believes that British authorities deceived Sharif Hussein by denying him the potential Pan-Arab leadership, and by not abiding by the formal letters he sent to the British High Commissioner in Cairo, Egypt, Henry McMahon, in which the Sharif demanded the control of certain Arab regions for a potential Kingdom in the Hejaz region (Bowden, 2015).

The uncertainty of negotiations proved to be the case for both the British authorities and Sharif Hussein as well, as each party took on numerous geo-strategic and socio-political interests without rationally reflecting upon the emerging consequences of such interests. From a Habermasian perspective, rational interaction and engagement in mutual political dialogues lead to creating logical atmospheres for negotiations, in which self-criticism and rational reflection are implemented to further generate better communication and self-understanding (Freundlieb, et al., 2004). In this connection, it can be stated that rational interaction and engagement were not effectively addressed, nor integrated into successful political dialogues and discussions. Interestingly, when Sharif Hussein was appointed by the Ottomans to rule the two holiest cities in Islam, namely
Mecca and Medina, their decision was based on the Sharif’s reputable tribe being descendants of the Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him) (Pappe, 1994). Yet, Sharif Hussein led the turn against the Ottomans, and entered the international political stage as the British gave him command of key areas in the MENA region, including Iraq (until the 1950s), Jordan (until the present day) and Syria (until 1920) (Walker, 2003).

Sharif Hussein recognised the potential of the post-Ottoman period, including his possible leadership in the Arabian Peninsula and the ideology of Arab nationalism (Teitelbaum, 1998). His political plans took place through contacting Britain’s High Commissioner in Cairo, Egypt, Henry McMahon, who held this influential position from 1915 - 1917 (Alangari, 2012). The Sharif had plans to retain the Arab lands for Arabs, particularly the Hashemite self-determination and rule over those lands (Bowden, 2015). However, the Hashemite family was in authoritarian conflicts with Ibn Saud tribe and Ibn Rashid in the Hijaz region. Thus, it was crucial for them to obtain assured support from Britain that wanted to keep the power split between the two Arab tribes (Alangari, 2012). In this connection, Sharif Hussein began his political negotiations with British authority, which have been described as ambiguous, particularly when it came to discussing the potential future of historical Palestine, Iraq and Syria (Meleady, 2016).

McMahon’s letters expressed the British intention in the MENA region, including pledging to ratify the Hashemite family to establish an Arab Khalifate of Islam, and uphold the independence of the Arabs as well (Meleady, 2016).
However, these letters were uncertain in the way in which the British did not specifically determine what they meant by upholding the independence of the Arabs (Friedman, 1970). As a result, the uncertainty encountered was due to the desire of the British to maintain their own interests and preserve their wartime ally, France, with its control of Syria (Friedman, 1970). A key problem with Britain’s intentions in McMahon’s letters concerned the undecided fate of historical Palestine in 1915 – 1916, in which the British assured Sharif Hussein to promote Arab independence in the region, which included Palestine (Schulze, 2013). In this regard, Kelly (2013) argues that Arab communities believe that the British authorities utilised certain colonial tactics to achieve geo-strategic and political agendas, particularly regarding Palestine and the potential handover to the Zionist European settlers.

The troubling news about the British agenda spread throughout the entire MENA region, and affected the clear majority of Arab Muslims, and particularly the Palestinians who felt that the United Kingdom (UK) had deceived them all (Kelly, 2013). Considering this, an acceleration of international and regional interest over Palestine commenced (Rabkin, 2013), and further geo-political uncertainties began to dominate over the Arab nations.

### 3.2.1.2 The Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration

Variou...
British and French geo-political approaches reshaped the MENA region based on the economic and geo-strategic interest of the two European nations that were concerned with secure maritime access and political command over the region (Dodd & Sales, 2015). By comparing the Sykes-Picot Agreement against the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence, it can be argued that the Balfour Declaration prompted the self-determination of the Arabs. On the other hand, the Sykes-Picot Agreement limited the dominion of the Arabs to be within the boundaries of the Arabian Peninsula. Accordingly, the double standards of all political actors involved had risen and aimed at strengthening their own geo-political positions, especially during the post-War era.

At the same time, Russian imperial interests and strategic demands were rising through the control of Constantinople and Anatolia, demonstrating Russia’s geo-strategic and religious interests in the MENA region as well (Scazzieri, 2015). While Britain and France were in the process of delineating their controlled regions and oil reserves (Scazzieri, 2015), Palestine was signified as an international territory under the combined administration of Britain and France (Scazzieri, 2015), resulting from the questionable approaches that were addressed in the Sykes-Picot Agreement. This uncertain situation in the MENA region and especially in Palestine piqued the Russian Orthodox Church’s interest in various cities of Palestine, including the holy city of Jerusalem (Chumakova, Shakhnovich, & Terukova, 2016).

It is clear that the political ambitions of Western actors involved in the socio-political affairs of the MENA region were directed towards implementing
their own governmental philosophies. In this context, Murphy and Fleming’s (2010) interpretation of critical theory can be of high significance as both authors indicate that Habermas’s political notions tend to defend the lived experiences of democratic principles, and most importantly renounce the potential projects of colonisation. Applying this theory, the political ambitions of Western actors contradict Habermas’s perspective on notions of democratic principles and freedom of society. By the same token, Habermas’s standpoints could have played a pragmatically crucial role in the context of Western actors by considering the democratic principles desired by the Arab Muslims, including the protection of Arab lands and the implementation of the proposal of self-determination.

Reinforcing democratic principles along with repudiating colonisation projects are fundamental aspects of Habermas’s critical theory (Murphy & Fleming, 2010).

Habermas stressed the positive impact of civil society through the implementation of a public sphere that facilitates platforms for strengthening democratic knowledge and achieving effective socio-political outcomes via mutual negotiations (Habermas, 1992/1996; Murphy & Fleming, 2010). Habermas’s presentation of different aspects of participatory and active bourgeois public spheres in Structural Transformation is also constructive for Arab-West international relations. Habermas considered that these aspects can be accomplished through the view of bureaucratic industrialised society which was being controlled by the elites and the media (Alway, 1995). In this context, Habermas’s work covers two critical themes that enhance Arab-West international
relations, including an in-depth analysis of the historical genesis based on the bourgeois public sphere.

Habermas’s interpretation of the bourgeois public sphere describes trends that surfaced a long time ago, and his interpretation is related to the concept of correlating the particular issues that dealt with an individual’s social, familial and economic life. Habermas stresses that these interpretations were in contrast to the demands depicted for public and social life.

In this context, it can be understood that the elements forming up the public sphere mostly consisted of political debate, information, journals, and newspaper articles (Bolton, 2005). Elements beyond these included literary salons, political clubs, pubs, public assemblies and coffee houses that catered to the needs of creating an environment for socio-political conversations. This quickly became an inspirational movement as it allowed an individual to raise their voice and convey their thoughts and needs and hold influence over political practice itself (Bolton, 2005). This was made possible through the use of the bourgeois public sphere, which had a dominating hand in opposing state power and the overwhelming burden of interest that was being imposed in a functioning bourgeois society. In this connection, it can be argued that the British and French authorities suppressed the formation of a bourgeois public sphere in Arab societies.

However, the public sphere resulted in individuals taking up roles of becoming passive consumers and indulging in their private affairs, instead of being interested in democratic participation and the collective good (Bolton, 2005). This gave way to an inevitable transition of the public sphere to mutate from a space
that defined a platform for rational debates and discussions to a domain consisting of a broader form of consumption and being administrated by dominant elite parties and corporations. This transformation soon resulted in a change for public opinion on matters of critical importance regarding state policy towards becoming an object of mechanical manipulation. Hence, political issues are considered to be professional matters which are worked on after gaining expert advice for them (Duelund, 2010). It is therefore evident that for Habermas, communicative action holds a crucial place as it allows people to come together in the public spheres and participate in rational argumentation so that they can bring forth their views regarding the norms of the society. By doing so, the members of the community will be able to come to a mutual understanding and thereby achieve some solidarity and social identity.

In this connection, the Habermasian way of comprehension tends to have the potential to strengthen the core value of rationality and mutual understanding that concern Arab Muslims and Western diplomats and politicians. Additionally, Habermas claims in his theory of communicative action that people in general have been following the set norms of society that hinder any argumentation, as the rules have been defined; hence, people are taught to act accordingly. Such a situation makes the community an undisputed and a peaceful place, but that is what the bureaucrats and the elites think it is. People, on the other hand, have been faced with a social crisis as they cannot follow the ideologies that have been forced upon them. Each member of the society has a different experience which cannot be defined through some thinking that was made many decades ago. Therefore, to
assist members of a community, particularly Arab Muslims in the MENA region, people should be allowed to participate freely in public gatherings and express their views on various socio-political and religious affairs.

This notion would need support by leading Western nations in order to promote genuine democracy and rationality. In this regard, it can be stated that not only has Habermas brought about a change in the concept of critical thinking, but he has also helped the intellectuals in understanding the implication of communicative action which is different from all the previous concepts. Habermas’s works therefore tend to be unique in the sense that he focuses on the members of a society to evaluate the societal condition. Enhancing the public sphere of both Arab Muslims and Western representatives can be achieved through engaging their civil society in democratic discussions where rational argumentation occurs and leads to avenues for grasping various aspects of socio-political and religious knowledge and advanced democracy. This would convey effective knowledge into Western diplomacy and its associated political training, the issue that will be taken up as a conclusion to this present study.

This interpretation is further supported by Alway (2005) who believes that Habermas’s critical theory presents opportunities for the social thinking of Arab Muslims and Western authorities, since it urges a wider exploration of cultural phenomena.

3.2.1.3 The Zionist Movement and Supporters in Europe

As an illustration of foreign interests in the MENA region, the Zionist movement and other influential supporters in Germany visualised their potential
and had a great deal of interest in the Ottoman controlled lands, especially historical Palestine (Baisez, 2016). El-Hasan (2010) states that the majority of European representatives, along with dominant Zionists, declined the political notions that aimed at settling the European Jews in British East Africa. However, it can be argued that the uncertain situation in Palestine was exacerbated by the creation of the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence and the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and importantly following the Balfour Declaration agreement in the British cabinet in November 1917. Evidently, the Balfour Declaration had a major impact on what was to become of Palestine, and what would turn into a major global controversy that remains unresolved until the present-day (Gutwein, 2016). Indeed, the Balfour Declaration document that was sent to Zionist patron, Lord Rothschild, represented a dramatic juncture that heavily affected the fate of the MENA region in various socio-political and religious perspectives (Mathew, 2013).

In this context, it is essential to cite what has been revealed in the controversial Balfour Declaration document to clarify the history of politics in the MENA region during that period and moreover the consequences of the document on the region as a whole:

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of
existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country. (Schenker, 2015, p. 103)

The Balfour Declaration document was the result of ongoing political pressures posed by the Zionists in Europe to hand over British-controlled Palestine to the European Jewish settlers and create a national home for them in historical Palestine (Mathew, 2011). In this context, El-Hasan (2010) argues that the West had organised arrangements to advocate and apply the Zionist project in Palestine prior to the initialisation of the Balfour Declaration in 1917.

In discussion of the political plans imposed by the British authority, it can be argued that neither cultural nor rational understanding of facts were present in conducting dialogues with the Arab communities, and that was arguably a failure in communication by the British representatives. On the issue of enhanced communication among political representatives, Lovat (2004) reiterates that Habermas’s critical theory is primarily concerned with the rational comprehension of facts, regardless of the surrounding context.

Habermas also considers that the rational comprehension of facts becomes significant when the human cognitive interest is freed from any destructive interruptions, which can potentially lead to creating critically self-reflective intuitions (Lovat, 2004). Therefore, another aspect that could potentially enhance future Arab-West international relations is Habermas’s assertion that indicates that knowledge is deep-seated in history and is interest bound. In *Knowledge and Human Interests and Theory, and Practice*, Habermas formulated a theory that is based on the cognitive interests which are an essential first step to understand the
relationship between knowledge and human activity. Furthering this concept of cognitive interests, Habermas then formulated the theory of communicative action. Moreover, whilst discussing the theory of cognitive interests, Habermas highlights that the purpose of this approach is to bring forth the conditions for the possibility of knowledge (Geuss, 1981).

Habermas asserts that history, social realism, and nature are all creations of the ongoing labor of the human race (Habermas, et al., 1974). He applauds knowledge regarding the issues that an individual is faced within their efforts to formulate their existence and to further create their species being. Furthermore, Habermas states that humans are in the habit of organising their experiences in light of cognitive interests, and beings who manipulate and take possession of objects, interacting with others of their kind through the use of symbols and gestures that have been created by a rule-governing institute (Habermas, et al., 1974). It is evident that human beings are interested in the development of knowledge that would allow them to have power over objectified processes and also to continue to communicate.

In light of the role of cognitive interests, Habermas presents a third interest that the human beings have towards reflective appropriation of their lives (Held, 1980). In case of its absence, the knowledge that is interest related will not be understood completely. Furthermore, humans have an interest in reason; they tend to be self-reflective and to act rationally. Due to this, knowledge is generated which increases autonomy and responsibility and it can also be termed as emancipatory interest.
These Habermasian concepts have the potential to reinforce the attitudes of Arab Muslims along with Western diplomats and politicians towards the significance of applying self-reflectivity and rationality in their dealings. Considering the effective correlation of knowledge and human activity, history, social realism, nature, organising the experiences of people according to cognitive interest and reason, and by applying these concepts on contemporary Islamic notions, political Islam can benefit greatly from Habermasian concepts and develop into a constructive platform for Western diplomats and politicians to convey their socio-political and religious concerns along with rationality and historical notions.

Given the proposal of self-determination that was outlined in the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence, as well as the self-rule option suggested by the U.S. administration at the time, the Balfour Declaration was seemingly contradictory in its nature, particularly on the principle of the self-determination for the Arabs. Indeed, the declaration initiated various socio-political disparities among politicians and academics alike, especially when debating the Palestinian capabilities to gain independence and sovereignty (Regan, 2016). Given these disparities, the national legitimacy constituent tends to remain a major obstruction for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as for the Arabs and influential Western figures, as it confronts them with complicated socio-political matters. Therefore, the Balfour Declaration has caused ongoing frustration among Arabs whose vision of self-determination began to fade away (Regan, 2016).
Contrary to the frustration caused among Arabs, many Jews view the Balfour Declaration as a vital political step forward for the European Zionists towards achieving a state of their own, as it affirmed their socio-political and religious ambitions in historical Palestine (Baxter & Akbarzadeh, 2008). Hence, the World Zionist Organisation (WZO) reached out to various key international and political players worldwide, in order to achieve its potential Jewish statehood in Palestine (Schenker, 2015). In this light, Britain was a key regional political player and their decisions influenced the fate of all nations in the MENA region, and the Palestinians who were directly affected by Britain’s aspirations. Keeping this in mind, it is also important to point out that the U.S. was emerging as a potential world power and by the time the Balfour Declaration had reached Washington in October 1917, the U.S. administration endorsed it and, upon passing it, the declaration entered the international stage (Baxter & Akbarzadeh, 2008). This meant that the concept of a national home for the Jewish settlers in Palestine had transitioned into a global socio-political subject (Schenker, 2015).

The Balfour Declaration did not necessarily serve as a statement that defined the exact boundaries and territories for the ideal Jewish national home, but it strongly provided tremendous support to the European Jewish settlers and their potential national home in Palestine (Parsons, 2013). In this context, Miller (2010) stresses that the Balfour Declaration referred to the physical map of the land of Palestine, as a geographical territory that included modern-day Jordan and Israel.

The mandate system implemented in the MENA region by the League of Nations in 1919 distributed the former territories of the Ottoman Empire among
the allies and wartime negotiators (Garfinkle, 2016). France gained control over Algeria and Tunisia, and was eager to add Syria to its list of occupied territories (Patrick, 2015). On the other hand, Britain had various interests in occupying Palestine and the entire region of Mesopotamia, and in later stages, Britain achieved its geo-political aspirations by dominating over these two regions (Patrick, 2015). While neither the Balfour Declaration nor the British Mandate of Palestine caused prompt reactions among the Palestinians and the wider Arab communities in the MENA region (Miller, 2010), it remains a reality that the indefiniteness of the socio-political affairs in the region led the Arabs to doubt their Western counterparts (Drake, 2014).

The indefiniteness of the socio-political affairs as perceived by the Arabs towards Western counterparts could have been prevented through the application of praxis as identified in Habermas’s critical theory. In this connection, the political agencies could directly interact and engage in dialogues with the individuals involved instead of relying exclusively on the cognitive action of humans or even inter-subjective experience (Lovat, 2004). In addition, Habermas describes this effective way of knowing as historical hermeneutic in which negotiators have the ability to subjectively interact in discussions, whilst visualising the potential outcomes of such interaction (Lovat, 2004). During 1919-1945, the U.S., as an emerging power, tried to mitigate the barriers and ease the tensions between the Palestinians and the Israelis in order to achieve a peaceful resolution that could potentially bring stability to the MENA region (Halabi,
However, the U.S. had the desire to further strengthen its interests and influence in the MENA region, especially after the discovery of oil (Patrick, 2015).

3.2.1.4 The King-Crane Report

The U.S. administration led by President Woodrow Wilson as well as other European superpowers proposed the assigning of a commission in Paris 1919, which would investigate and consider the demands of the Arabs and what they inclined to achieve (Drake, 2014). Accordingly, King-Crane Commission 1919 issued the following statement:

The American people—having no political ambitions in Europe or the Near East; preferring, if that were possible, to keep clear of all European, Asian, or African entanglements but nevertheless sincerely desiring that the most permanent peace and the largest results for humanity shall come out of this war—recognize that they cannot altogether avoid responsibility for just settlements among the nations following the war, and under the League of Nations. (as cited in Baxter & Akbarzadeh, 2008, p. 18)

This excerpt from the King-Crane Report highlighted the U.S. intentions to forsake its geo-political ambitions in Europe and the Near East that constituted the MENA region. With these intentions in mind, it can be also stated that the U.S. sought to play a peacekeeping role that highlighted the necessity of recognising the consequences of the regional changes, especially in the MENA region. Other interpretations of these events hold that the U.S. was proposing to become an active key player in the MENA region, particularly when the conclusion of the
King-Crane Report indicated the U.S. concerns over the French role in Syria (Reimer, 2006).

The report came under the spotlight when it pinpointed the Palestinians opposition to the fulfillment of the Balfour Declaration and the formation of a national home for the European Jewish settlers in Palestine (Casper, 2003). Zionist negotiators and Yishuv leaders in Palestine did not classify reconciliation with the Arabs as being of high importance (Caplan, 2015). In fact, they believed that the Jewish people possessed a legitimate cause to dominate over Palestine in accordance with various religious beliefs that dated back over 2000 years (Jacobson, 2011). In this regard, the Zionist negotiators were inclined to conduct negotiations and agreements with the European representatives rather than the Palestinian inhabitants, who were the clear majority in Palestine during that time (Fink, 2006).

The deprivation of effective communication approaches by the Zionist negotiators along with the impact of policy decision-making invites further pragmatic political approaches to be implemented. In this connection, Habermas’s intuitions on effective communication can play a pivotal role, particularly by integrating his theory of communicative action. Habermas’s intuitions tend to provide opportunities that respond to the lack of effective communication approaches, since Arab voices have been marginalised and excluded. Habermas illustrates how to achieve constructive outcomes via effective communication that can be accomplished by understanding the crucial role of rationality, particularly when mutual communication occurs in dialogues (Schaefer, et al., 2013).
To illustrate, the King-Crane Commission understood that the people of the MENA region rejected the British Mandate rule and demanded a prompt termination to the Zionist settlement project, as well as implementing the Arab self-administration strategy (Hammond, 2009). Notably, the King-Crane Report rejected the proposal of dividing the sovereignty between Lebanon and Syria, and campaigned against it (Ismael, Ismael, & Perry, 2016). Additionally, the King-Crane Report supported the Hashemite’s position, particularly supporting the Kingship of Faisal, the son of Sharif Hussein (Allawi, 2014). Moreover, the King-Crane Report considered the Balfour Declaration, but reinforced the necessity to respect and protect the right of all non-Jewish civilians in historical Palestine and their religious freedom as well (Patrick, 2015). In this context, the report expressed various concerns over the idea of having a national Jewish home within the Arab land of Palestine, whilst respecting the rights of non-Jewish residents in Palestine (Rogan, 2009).

For these reasons, Smith (2009) illustrates that the report advocated for the limitation of Jewish immigration into Palestine and demanded the withdrawal of the proposal that called to convert Palestine into a solely Jewish state. As a result, the report caused agitation for U.S. allies, primarily Britain and France who were in the final process of consolidating their geo-political interest in the MENA region. However, it was not long before the mandate rule for the Middle East was granted at the 1920 San Remo Conference in Italy (Molinaro, 2009). This was followed with an official confirmation by the United Nations (UN) in 1922, and
eventually came into force in September 1923 following the Turkish signature on the Lausanne Peace Treaty (Molinaro, 2009).

To emphasise, France began its mandate over Syria, and consequently devised a Lebanese State, which has been known as the Republic of Lebanon ever since (Kitching, 2015). In this connection, the French political vision was based on the ambition to strengthen political interests and protect the political influence of the Maronite Christian people who were the majority in Lebanon at that time (Grafton, 2003). In a wider context, the French rejected any attempt at the unity of Arabs from fear of the threat that Arab unity might have on their geo-political interests in Syria and Lebanon (Rizk, 2009). Having the support of the French Mandate, the Lebanese Christians secured the creation of the State of Greater Lebanon in September, 1920, following the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. In doing so, the democratic-secular France that rallied against the Islamic Ottoman Empire in the MENA region, had itself implemented a geo-political policy in the MENA region based on Christian-religious perspectives. In other words, the French authority had in fact contradicted the very foundation of the 1905 French law, in which France separated the church from the state (Thompson, 2014). Britain simultaneously secured its geo-political ambitions in Palestine both diplomatically and by force, which left the Arabs restrained and ambiguous about the future of their region while it was being split among foreign Europeans (Hahn, 2004).
3.2.1.5 The Circumstances of Uncertainty in the MENA Region

Considering the circumstances of uncertainty in the MENA region, the political approaches of Western governments in the MENA region were limited by geo-political ambitions, and beyond that, self-interested strategies were evident as well. If political approaches instead reinforced critique and rational thinking, as illustrated in Habermas’s theory of communicative action, freedom, inclusion and coherent understanding are generated to an extent where constructive communicative actions are increased and developed (Lovat, Dally, Clement & Toomey, 2011). As a result, it was possible for the freedom of Arab lands during that period of time to have been democratically determined by Arabs themselves, particularly if the foundational aspects of Habermas’s theory of communicative action were at least referred to in an era of uncertainty and recriminations.

In the MENA region affairs, a wide range of interest grew to witness the rise of another Arab tribe – the Al-Saud, along with the Hashemite family. The Al-Saud was ruled by Abdul-Aziz ibn Saud, who had various geo-political interests in the Arabian Peninsula and understood that by having the support of the British authority, his ultimate political ambitions in the Hijaz region would be accomplished (Al-Rasheed, 2010). Abdul-Aziz ibn Saud’s ambitions were fulfilled and the Al-Saud tribe became the rulers of the Arabian Peninsula in 1929, after the demise of the Hashemite family in the Hijaz region in 1925 (Teitelbaum, 2001). In 1921, the British authorities decided to assign some areas of Mandatory Palestine to be ruled under Sharif Hussein’s second eldest son, Abdullah who later became the ruler of Transjordan, presently known as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.
Ismael et al., 2016). Britain’s decision was planned for the geo-political and strategic aim of making Transjordan a stronghold against Wahhabism driven by Ibn Saud (Wilson, 1990).

The Arabs initially believed that the fall of the Ottoman Empire would have positive outcomes for them, considering that their relations with the Turks in the 20th century had been based on apprehension and doubt (Podeh, 2007). However, the Arabs were to face disappointment when their region fell into the hands of Western colonisers (McMillan, 2016). Thus, frustration and dissatisfaction spread among Arabs in the MENA region as their aspirations of independence were quashed, following the British and French control over their lands (Scott-Baumann, 2009). As a result, the geo-political changes that occurred in the MENA region were objectionable to Arab leaders, particularly Sharif Hussein whom the British negotiated with to secure the British Mandate over Palestine and Iraq (Abu-Lebdeh, 1997). By the same token, it can be argued that the geo-political changes would have been inconceivable to implement without the cooperation of regional key leaders with Britain and France, in addition to the pressures reinforced by the Zionist movement respectively. Evidently, the two newly established states of Transjordan and Lebanon were undeniably products of Western colonial powers (Zamir, 2000).

The distribution of sovereignty of the previously controlled Ottoman lands among Western powers and regional Arab leaders occurred in two crucial phases. First, the establishment of new Arab states, and secondly the creation of Israel as a Jewish state among Arab nations. Certainly, the Arab-Islamic nations believed that
the creation of Israel as a Jewish state in historical Palestine was the cause of various socio-political dilemmas that spanned the 20th century until the present-day. Hence, Ganim (2001) claims that the Arab-Islamic nations still believe that Israel represents one of the most conspicuous antagonist in the recent history of the MENA region. Although such a claim may sound extreme, the various socio-political impacts on Palestinians through massive immigration to neighboring countries, as well as the occupation of large parts of Arab lands by Israel, may have played a significant role in reinforcing Arab perceptions towards Israel. Hence, it is crucial to recognise the impacts of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on international relations and foreign policies, should a peaceful future resolution occur.

The Palestinian dilemma also tends to play a significant role in shaping the future of socio-political affairs in the entire MENA region, and the way Arabs view politics in the Western world. In this connection, Rynhold (2015) stresses that the U.S. and Israel enjoy a vigorous relationship and advocacy on many socio-political aspects that go beyond the U.S. empirical calculations of interests. Although this may sound constructive, it does reflect differently on international politics, as the correlation between the U.S. and Israel is often viewed negatively among Arabs in the MENA region. For this reason, Rynhold (2015) indicates that the preceding U.S. advocacy shows that there was 2-3 times more statements made in support of Israel to the Arab cause in the 20th century. Certainly, there is no shortage of dispute among the Arabs regarding the U.S. advocacy of socio-political initiatives for Israel, and this has resulted in an increase of anti-Israeli and
anti-American standpoints. Even though the U.S. was not a key player in establishing the state of Israel prior to 1948, their inclination to have a stronger influence in the MENA region intensified throughout the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. This has fostered the Arab disapproval of any socio-political initiatives and foreign policies conducted by the U.S. towards the MENA region, and further increased Anti-Americanism (Baxter & Akbarzadeh, 2008).

The existence of anti-Israelism and anti-American themes among the Arabs cannot be dismissed, but arguably, these themes of opposition could have been at least reduced, particularly when implementing the contemporary correlative matters associated with Habermas’s theory of communicative action, including a modern form of rationality, variations of society and the concept of enlightenment.

These matters vary according to how they are identified in the political sense in order to accomplish rationality through effective political approaches. In this regard, the U.S. along with Israel and the Arabs themselves, lacked cohesive methods of contemporary rationality that would have curbed forms of captivity imposed in the subjectivistic and individualistic statements related to advanced philosophy and social theory.

Above all, Habermas’s theory of communicative action illustrates how modernisation is interpreted according to the way Habermas reads it. In this context, Habermas describes modernisation as a circle that involves the rotation of the communicative rationalisation of the social lived experiences of people throughout the associated historical periods. On the other hand, thinkers such as Max Weber addresses rationality when modernisation is concerned, as an
exclusive instrumental process deriving from the practice of scientific methods and technological skills (Jacobson et al., 2017). However, Habermas’s conception of rationality tends to be more comprehensive as he emphasises the importance of lived social experiences, and criticises the instrumental process via hard science, whilst considering the importance of reason and what these lived experiences can offer in terms of rational comprehension and capabilities encompassing socio-cultural principles and individual identity (Jacobson et al., 2017).

Jacobson et al. (2017) illustrate that the identity of all individuals engaging within a society along with the meanings associated due to such engagement, are strongly influenced by these lived experiences. According to Habermas’s theory of communicative action, modernising the lived cultural experiences within a society requires institutes that promote rational communication when addressing social change initiatives in order to generate pragmatic solutions to the emerging historical and modern-day experiments (Jacobson et al., 2017). Likewise, when rationality is integrated into a modern system that assimilates the variations of society, along with the lived experiences and system patterns, there will be opportunities to establish a critical theory of modernity that investigates the concept of enlightenment. This guides the enhancement of socio-political communication patterns, and ultimately creates a better understanding of all parties involved in any form of political negotiation.

This comprehension, whereby communicative rationality is contributed to various phases of discussion, rather than purely cognitive, are particularly applicable in the Arab world due to the presence of various historical events.
cultures and religions, extremism, socio-political uprisings and civil wars. According to Habermas’s theory of communicative action, these correlative matters of critical understanding of the connection between contemporary political life, rationality and understanding society are significant, especially when combined in an effective setting whereby theoretical constructions along with historical reconstructions can evolve to enhance socio-political learning platforms and mutual understanding (Habermas, 1981/1984). Therefore, it can be stated that these procedures of rational communication and critical understanding are of value in convoluted political atmospheres, particularly when political ambitions, domination and democratic principles contradict one another, and leave flimsy opportunities for better communication and rationality among political negotiators.

Regarding emerging political entities during the 1940s, Israel as a newly established state had the desire to expand its occupation of the Palestinian lands, and by the end of the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank, the Sinai and the Golan Heights, affecting the Arab inhabitants of those occupied territories (Oren, 2010). Furthermore, Israel occupied the holy city of Jerusalem, gaining the city’s socio-religious status among the adherents of Islam, Christianity and Judaism as well as its current position in world politics (Halabi, 2014). Given the high profile of the holy city of Jerusalem among the Arabs in the MENA region, and the potential regional trials triggered by Israel, the Arabs had designated Israel as an aggressor who repetitively oppressed Palestinian civilians.

Despite the Arab view of Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), founded in 1964, declared its recognition of Israel in 1998 based on the
territories that were under the British Mandate of Palestine (Khalil, 2016). The PLO acknowledged 78% of the territories controlled by the British Mandate for Israel, whilst setting the potential Palestinian state on the remaining 22% of the land (Sabbah, 2015). For Sabbah, the ongoing conflict between both the Christian and Muslim Palestinians and the Israelis is of a purely political nature, and is not based on the religious beliefs of the three Abrahamic faiths. As Archbishop and Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem between 1987 to 2008, he expressed his recent disappointment at the proclamations made by some of Israel’s political leaders who stated that there will be no Palestine, nor peace in the region. These proclamations are evidence of counterproductivity in Arab-Israeli peace negotiations, especially when considering the current affairs in the MENA region. On the other hand, Sabbah (2015) acknowledged that many Arabs as well as Israelis have occasionally brought their religious beliefs into these political conflicts, potentially turning the political war between the two sides into a religious battle.

In contexts where enhanced communication approaches are implemented, clarity and better understanding generally follow. This notion is supported by Habermas’s theory of communicative action, in which Habermas emphasises the significant role of effective communication, through knowing one’s language (Habermas, 1981/1984). Communicative action reinforces the potential positive outcomes of mutual interaction, inclusion and accessibility in dialogues where people can explicitly address their social perceptions and political ambitions (Habermas, 1981/1984). In this regard, it is crucial to emphasise that all religious
groups adhering to the Abrahamic faiths should be able to enjoy free access to the holy city of Jerusalem based on historical religious beliefs. In other words, The Arab-Israeli War in 1967 had affected the religious ideologies of the Arab nations, especially when conducting socio-political endeavours with leading Western governments.

3.2.1.6 The Nationalist Zionist Movement

Historically, the nationalist Zionist movement had various socio-political ambitions, and its proposal for Israel to exist as a state goes back to the 19th century, originating in the region of Eastern Europe (Gitelman, 1997). Moreover, the nationalist Zionist movements in both Europe and America subsequently advocated for the potential creation of the state of Israel in Palestine (Eisenberg, 2002). Furthermore, the Zionist initiatives were upheld by the movement’s founder, Hungarian-born Jew Theodor Herzl (May 2, 1860 – July 3, 1904), who initially proposed the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, and later demanded it fervently (Alam, 2009). Herzl vigorously backed the immigration process of European Jews into historical Palestine as part of his revolutionary strategies. To achieve his socio-political agendas and assist the potential assembly of the state of Israel, Herzl established the WZO in 1897 (Cook, 2012). His ambitions were supported by the nationalist Zionist movement in Europe who claimed that the Jewish people’s growth and well-being are solely dependent on the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine (Conforti, 2011). Thus, it can be perceived that the Zionist’s ideology was derived from both political and religious perspectives at the same time.
The Zionist ideology can also be traced back to Biblical narratives of Judaism and the connections to Jerusalem, as well as the significance Jerusalem holds in the traditions and customs that span the three Abrahamic religions (Baxter & Akbarzadeh, 2008). Therefore, the Zionist movement began its immigration process by sending European Jews into Palestine to construct a larger Jewish presence in it (Israeli, 2016). Other European Jewish organisations such as the Bundists did not favor the strategy of moving European Jews into Palestine, or reconstructing a Jewish national home in it (Slucki, 2012). The advantages of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 played a significant role in fostering the ambitions of the Zionist movement’s leaders to escalate their campaign further on the international stage and establish a Jewish home in Palestine (Alroey, 2016). At that time, European Jews were targeted and discriminated against in Europe, and therefore, the modern Zionist movement supported by Britain emerged to gradually fulfil their needs (Criollo, 2010).

The Zionist movement endeavoured to facilitate the route of European Jews to enter Palestine (Wagner, 2014). In this connection, it can be argued that Britain’s powerful status was vital for Zionist leaders, particularly on the international stage. To illustrate, the British support of Zionism was one of the key elements that advocated for the implementation of the Zionist projects in Palestine. Moreover, it can be stated that the correlation between the British Mandate for Palestine and the Balfour Declaration advocating for a national home for European Jewish immigrants in Palestine, made the strategic mission of the Zionist leaders more tangible.
British authorities soon found that they were faced with the daunting reality of having two communities differing in terms of religion and race now living on the same territory, and sharing opposing geo-political visions (Bunton, 2013). Hence, Bunton (2013) asserts that the British promise of hope and harmony to both Arabs and Jews were conflicting their desired strategic plans in the mandate system. In this context, it can be stated that the British mission became more challenging as the regional geo-strategic and religious conflicts increased and led to further complications between the Palestinians and the European Jewish settlers. As a result of the increased socio-political dilemma between the Arabs, the British authority and the Jews, a clear transformation of knowledge grasping and critical understanding are required. This can be achieved through applying Habermas’s critical theory along with his theory of communicative action, whereby political negotiators are equipped with the platforms necessary to critically comprehend historical knowledge and religion via rationality and interaction with the whole person, rather than referring to the cognitive action or even inter-subjective experience of others who are directly involved in the socio-political dilemma. This is of significance, should a pragmatic future resolution occur to strengthen the fragile Arab-West international relations.

As the imperial presence of Britain intensified in the MENA region, a strategic mission to expel the Ottomans and diminish their control over Palestine was launched (Hollis, 2016). In this connection, the British motivation was driven by the potential control of natural resources in the city of Mosul as well as the command of trade routes between the Indian subcontinent and Europe (Mather,
In contrast, the Ottoman Empire suffered from internal division, and economic and military pressure that ultimately exhausted the long-ruling empire and led to the loss of territory (Macfie, 2013). Thus, the Ottoman Empire fell in the 1920s when Mustapha Kemal Ataturk revoked its authority and eventually declared the Republic of Turkey in 1923 under his command (Alaranta, 2008). As the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the British authorities took control of Palestine (Hahn, 2007) and subsequently began to provide the European Jewish settlers with further power and authority over Palestinian lands. This facilitated Jewish settlement procedures and further strengthened their economic and socio-political status (Shafir, 1996), while fuelling Palestinians concerns around the vagueness of British policies towards them, particularly where their legitimacy to practice self-determination and other socio-political rights were denied. This made them consider themselves to be citizens of a new British occupied nation (Khalidi, 2007).

In this light, Hahn (2007) emphasises that the British governance of Palestine lacked efficiency in ruling the country, particularly when strains and socio-political impediments emerged among the Palestinians and the Israelis. For this reason, it can be argued that the Palestinian tenure system of lands and the security of the Palestinian population began to fluctuate. This resulted in further financial burdens and social obligations weighing on the Palestinians. From July 1922, the League of Nations announced that Britain had been assigned as the mandatory authority over Palestine, and this took effect until 1948 (Hollis, 2016). Throughout that period, the British attempted to gradually gain strategic and
economic power across the MENA region in order to protect their national interests, particularly in Palestine (Cleveland & Bunton, 2016). This was followed by implementing an inequilateral religious-based scheme that made life for the Palestinians quite challenging (Criollo, 2010). With the conclusion of the British mandatory authority and false peace over Palestine in 1948, the first Arab-Israeli war erupted that witnessed the creation of the nation of Israel accordingly (Morris, 2008).

As a result of this war, the Arab population of Palestine decreased, and two-thirds of Arab Palestinians became refugees (Hollis, 2016). The Palestinian refugee crisis began, and areas such as the Gaza strip (under Egyptian administration prior to Israel’s occupation), the West Bank (administered by Jordan until 1967), Jordan, Lebanon and Syria became grounds for Palestinian refugee camps (Hollis, 2016). The situation was further complicated when the war of June 1967 broke out between the Palestinians and the Israelis, resulting in Israel occupying East Jerusalem and the Gaza strip, along with the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt and the Golan Heights in Syria, and taking command of the West Bank from Jordan, (Louis & Shlaim, 2012). After winning the war in 1967, arrogance spread among the Israeli leadership due to witnessing their occupying forces taking full control over the entire territories of mandatory Palestine and neighbouring nations at the expense of the Arabs (Swirski, 2005).

Arab-Israeli relations remained relatively settled until 1987 and the first intifada whereby the Palestinians demanded and fought for an independent State. The first intifada, beginning in December 1987, was initiated in response to the
ongoing Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and remained until September 1993 (Ismail, 2009; Noakes & Wilkins, 2002). Despite the imbalance of power of the Palestinians in facing the sophisticated Israeli Defence Force (IDF), the IDF perceived the Palestinian demands as an ongoing threat to Israel’s national security and its political and economic stability (Swirski, 2005).

Given the socio-political conflicts that occurred post 1987, it is important to explore the motives and circumstances of the first and second intifada, particularly when knowledge surrounding the Arab-Israeli conflict is often inadequate. In this regard, the international media reports and coverage of domestic affairs and socio-political conflicts between the Palestinians and the Israelis are deluded and uneven (Deprez & Raeymaeckers, 2011). This supports the notion of this dissertation in exploring the circumstances that surrounded the first and second intifada along with their implications in the MENA region. In addition, exploring the Ottomans practices in governing the MENA region can be constructive in comparing the Ottoman and British rule in the region.

The Ottomans were inclined to facilitate social and religious coexistence among Abrahamic religions, particularly in the greater Syria region that included Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine (Abu-Nimer, Khoury, & Welty, 2007). Hence, Christians, Jews and Muslims coexisted in relative harmony and this distinguished the Ottoman era in the MENA region, where mutual interfaith communications were present. It is important to highlight that the Ottoman Empire’s approach towards various religious groups were based on Islamic values, recalling the successes of the Muslims in Spain, where Islam, Christianity and
Judaism flourished together (Abu-Nimer, Khoury, & Welty, 2007). In fact, the peace and religious tolerance in Palestine applied by the Ottomans dates to 637 CE, when the Muslim Caliph Omar Ibn Al-Khattab took control of Bethlehem, an Arab Christian Palestinian town, and ordered his companions to protect Christian churches and Jewish temples, and requested to have a mosque for the Muslims to practise their faith nearby in order to protect all houses of worship from any harm (Norris, 2013). Considering these aspects of religious tolerance by the Muslim leadership, it is important to point out that these aspects are in line with Habermas’s perspective on how religion and democracy can constructively function together. In this connection, Habermas advocates for a joint task for democratic principles and the resoluteness of religion to consolidate democracy for enhancing communicative reason and rationality (Gordon, 2013). This notion is particularly essential when considering the socio-political affairs of the MENA region, as Habermas’s standpoint introduces a segment where all society members can benefit from maintaining the normative content that potentially leads to generating benevolent actions.

By the same token, Habermas valued profound understanding of religion, in which religious aspects can be theoretically addressed, analysed and actioned (Gordon, 2013). In this connection, this could lead to an effective visualisation of social matters, in which Habermas’s advocacy for rational thinking and benevolent reflection is freely meticulous and well-kept (Lovat, 2013a). Considering the variations between the British and the Ottomans socio-political approaches, it can be said that Britain utilised a different political approach to their Ottoman
opponents during their administration over Palestine, and their practices have led to the current ongoing dispute among various religious groups in the MENA region.

Several foreign observing nations were engaged in the MENA region, and as the Ottoman Empire began to decline at the end of WW2, the British utilised the opportunity to expand their control over the Arab world. To achieve this, the British and their allies offered the Palestinians and other Arab leaders their own self-ruling system, but in return, the Arabs were required to fight with Britain against the Ottoman Empire (Criollo, 2010). Meanwhile, Britain and the Zionists conducted closed-door agreement deals where the British promised to allow the Zionist forces to further occupy Palestine, and in return, the Zionists promised to strengthen the British interest and presence in the Arab world (Criollo, 2010). In 1948, The State of Israel was established, and while the Palestinians fought to claim back their lands, Israel occupied around 80 percent of the Palestinian territories, leaving behind hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees who fled to neighbouring countries, including Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria (Criollo, 2010).

In establishing their new occupation, Israeli forces destroyed dozens of towns and around 400 villages, displacing 750,000 Palestinians (Abreek-Zubiedat, 2015). This catastrophe played a crucial role in changing the lives of the Palestinian people and their future as well. Indeed, the Palestinians suffered socially and politically for many decades, and it can be argued that the creation of the State of Israel in Palestine had a tremendous impact on the geo-political
perspectives of both Arabs and Westerners. In this regard, it is pivotal to rationally understand the ongoing and overall suffering of the Palestinian people to avoid repeating these shattering circumstances that are impacting their daily lives, as it is common for humans to interpret socio-political and historical affairs according to their own perspective and subsequently pass it onto the next generation, which could potentially create a further sense of ambiguity among nations. To demonstrate, the Arab-Israeli conflict that spanned the 20th century until now has had a great deal of impact on the foreign policies of Western governments, in particular the U.S. foreign policies towards the MENA region (Tucker, 2016). Therefore, a sense of anti-Americanism began appearing among Arab nations in the MENA region, especially when pondering the U.S. attitudes and reactions towards the struggles of the Palestinian people and the atrocities committed by the IDF against them (Baxter & Akbarzadeh, 2008).

3.2.1.7 The Palestinian Politics and the Arab-Israeli Uprisings

The sanctity of Palestine and the city of Jerusalem in particular to Christians, Jews and Muslims worldwide, means that many Muslims across the globe refer to the current status of Palestine as a sign of deterioration for the brotherhood of the three Abrahamic religions (Hroub, 2009). Moreover, Palestine has witnessed many destabilising events and the political atmosphere has been transformed accordingly. One of these events was the first Palestinian intifada in 1987, that witnessed the birth of the Harakat Al-Muqawamah Al-Islamiyyah (Hamas) or the Islamic Resistance Movement (Natil, 2015). In this connection, Natil (2015) emphasises that Hamas had various military and political ambitions to
defy the authority of the PLO, and stand against the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian lands as well.

Following the ebb and flow of Israeli and Palestinian relations, tension built up to a point where a traffic accident in the Gaza Strip in December 1987 caused enough civil unrest to ignite the first intifada (El-Hasan, 2010). Furthermore, the accident triggered such a massive uprising among Palestinians against Israel, that consequently came under international media interest and coverage (Yousef & Brackin, 2011). The first intifada was seen among the Palestinians as a national objective and movement of liberation from the socio-political trials imposed by Israel, and rapidly spread across the Palestinian territories (Tucker, 2013). As a result, the Israeli leadership perceived the need for an immediate and swift response, ordering heavy military action to combat the intifada (Kumaraswamy, 2015).

For the Palestinians, the first intifada was sustained to achieve socio-political objectives, so their responses varied from boycotting Israeli products to throwing stones at the Israeli armored vehicles (Kumaraswamy, 2015). Correspondingly, the international media began to broadcast images showing Israeli soldiers beating up powerless Palestinian civilians, and showed the aggravated situation (Hunter, 1993). It became crucial for the international community to intervene to deescalate the violent situation and prevent further loss of life. In this regard, the Israeli responses to contain the Palestinian intifada raised concerns over the moral and political challenges of occupation, considering its harshness and aggression (Sucharov, 2005). As the conflict escalated,
confrontations of Hamas militia in the West Bank against the Israeli military increased, and were carried out by Palestinian youths in several operations using weapons at hand such as stones and slingshots (Gordon & Oxnevad, 2016). Various political divisions among the secular Palestinian political parties were amplified, in which opponent parties showed disjointed political visions, and hence the priority to accomplish socio-political reforms was interrupted (Sahliyeh, 1995).

The Palestinian people sought to allocate alternative political options through electing Hamas, particularly when the secular political parties neglected the marginalised social groups in the Gaza Strip (AlSayyad, 2010). They also sought to shift their politics in favour of achieving the long-awaited self-governing state (AlSayyad, 2010). In the meantime, the project of Jewish settlement in Palestine remained active, whilst the Palestinians arranged various treaties and agreements in the hope of mitigating the barriers (Charles River Editors, 2012).

The gradual establishment of Hamas began through Sheikh Ahmad Yassin (1937 - 2004), who had been a persuasive politician and Imam among Palestinians and other Arab Muslims as well (Chehab, 2007). Since its establishment, Hamas played an unofficial political role in Palestinian politics and rapidly gained a good reputation among its supporters (Baxter & Akbarzadeh, 2008). In this connection, the socio-political endeavours of Hamas were recognised when it officially entered the Palestinian political system and subsequently won the national democratic election in January 2006 over Fatah, the other major Palestinian political organisation (Ayoob, 2014). Fatah, formerly known as the Palestinian National Liberation Movement, is one of the largest Palestinian parties affiliated with the
PLO (Natil, 2015). Therefore, Hamas’s victory shocked many local and foreign political observers, while being met with great approval by those who voted for it (Berti, 2013; Schanzer, 2008).

Electing Hamas as the sole representative of the Palestinian people shocked U.S. politics, and was completely rejected by Israel (Serry, 2016). In this context, the U.S. government reacted to Hamas’s victory differently as it challenged their foreign policy towards Palestine and the MENA region as well (Saleem, 2007). These challenges may have emanated from Hamas’s Islamic orientation, and the U.S. rejection of Hamas contradicted the basic regulations of the U.S. endorsement of democracy, regardless of political spectrums. Nevertheless, the U.S. refused to legitimise Hamas as a democratically elected government to represent the Palestinian people (Azar, 2011). According to Azar (2011), the U.S. decision was driven by other political agendas that aimed at weakening the government of Lebanon which had a close association with Hezbollah, which is viewed as an Islamic and military group, particularly in the Western world.

According to Habermas’s epistemological theory of knowing, there is an exigency to critically and rationally understanding political affairs and social matters (Lovat, 2013a). Therefore, when considering the outcomes of the political Palestinian context, it can be stated that by declining the legitimacy of Hamas, the U.S. and Israeli governments evoked the need to redirect Western diplomats and politicians’ gaze to the association between the chronology of catastrophes and the current socio-political status of Palestine (Vázquez-Arroyo, 2013). In this regard, the study argues that the Arab aspiration of self-determination had been affected.
by the U.S. decision, and consequently caused the Arabs to doubt the authenticity of the U.S. administration efforts to promote democracy in the MENA region, which are instead seen as only favouring U.S. interests. Hence, the Palestinian dream of having a democratically elected government diminished as their free choice had been rejected by the U.S. and its allies respectively.

It is important to indicate that one of the main differences between Hamas and Fatah lies within their ideological orientation, as Hamas considers itself an Islamic party (Davis, 2016; Dunning, 2016), whilst Fatah sees itself as a secular-nationalist party (Hodge, 2008). The lack of strategic and social-political achievements made by Fatah during its period in power were major factors for their campaign defeat to Hamas (Berti, 2013). In 2007, the internal conflict of power among the Palestinians as well as the deterioration of political divisions demonstrated the variance of political visions and led to military confrontations between Hamas and Fatah (Ghanem, 2013).

The political conflict between Hamas and Fatah had presumably ended when both parties agreed to split power among themselves, whereby Hamas would administer the Gaza Strip, and Fatah would administer the West Bank (Schulz, 2013). In this connection, Aly, Feldman and Shikaki (2013) stress that Hamas was not interested in the monopoly of power, but rather in the coordination with its opponent Fatah, to govern the socio-political affairs of the Palestinian people. Conversely, Fatah was not inclined to collaborate with the elected government of Hamas, which made the political mission of Hamas further complicated (Aly, et al., 2013) Therefore, it can be understood that Fatah seemed to be the transgressor
at that stage for its refusal to accept democracy when Hamas won the election. Consequently, Fatah’s coup attempt led to clashes with Hamas where the latter sought to maintain its legitimacy to govern, and eventually recaptured the Gaza Strip (Byman, 2011).

### 3.2.1.8 The Reactions of the European Union towards the Election of Hamas

Internationally, the European Union (EU) described the Palestinian elections that brought Hamas into authority as democratic and transparent. However, the EU soon joined other international actors, including the U.S. and Israel, in declining the legitimate election of Hamas (Siniver, 2012). Considering this perspective, several studies have been conducted to illustrate the differences between Hamas and Fatah. For example, Liotta and Miskel (2012); Abdelal (2016) and Tessler (2009) have argued that Fatah was a corrupt political organisation that lacked pragmatic leadership and administration skills to govern Palestine. Abdelal (2016) and Tessler (2009) have described Hamas as a well-organised and resilient movement, in addition to its long history of humanitarian and social relief efforts for those affected by the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian lands.

These perspectives are contrary to the U.S. reaction in rallying against Hamas and advocating for Fatah as the only way for the Palestinians to gain a better economic status, international acceptance, and support as well as peace (Byman, 2013a). Arguably, this stance has provided a clear message of contradiction to the Arab and Islamic world regarding the international community’s genuine obligation towards democracy in the MENA region, and that
further deteriorated the U.S.’s hypocritical approach towards any political development, particularly when political Islam is involved.

Some of the key historical aspects that have been discussed previously were the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts and the deterioration of Arab-Israeli relations as well. To elaborate on the series that led to that deterioration, it is crucial to address the events that followed the growth of the Israeli occupation and settlement strategies in the Palestinian territories. In this connection, Lowe (2010) stresses that Israel has no legitimacy to occupy Palestinian lands and diminish their private properties for the purpose of defending its illegitimate occupied territories. Furthermore, the UN maintains a strong position in condemning the ongoing violations of human rights, the settlements and deportations committed by Israel against the Palestinians (Koury, 2010).

There was another Palestinian uprising on the horizon, known as the second intifada (Al-Aqsa Intifada) which occurred between September, 2000 and February, 2005 (Bregman, 2016). Bregman notes that this uprising escalated rapidly, especially when the leader of the Likud Party and the 11th Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon visited the Al-Aqsa mosque at a time when the political situation was tense, placing further pressures on the mounting Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Palestinian perception of Sharon was particularly strained due to his role in the siege of Beirut in 1982 (Hartley & Cossali, 2004), which resulted in international condemnations of Israel and potentially caused many controversies (Bloomberg, 2004). Furthermore, Sharon’s presence was followed with waves of unrest in which Palestinians clashed with the Israeli army across the territories,
condemning his visit (Peters, 2013). As a result, the swift involvement of both the Palestinians and the Israelis amounted to bloodshed in the second intifada from 2000 to 2005 and this differentiated it from the first intifada (Beinart, 2012).

Within the three years of the second intifada, Palestinians employed suicide bombings to target and kill Israeli civilians, whilst the Israelis responded by conducting severe airstrikes that targeted and killed Palestinian civilians as well (Junka-Aikio, 2015).

It is clear that neither the Palestinians, nor the Israelis have referred to the importance of understanding the ultimate meaning behind Habermas’s critical theory. This was evident in the disregard for the significance of human society whereby liberties and demands of people are indispensably preserved and actioned. Considering the deterioration within Palestinian politics, a swift political transition was introduced by the Islamisation of Palestinian politics through Hamas, which presented itself as a political Islamic party, and thus confronted the secular movements in Palestine with an Islamic national context (Mishal & Sela, 2000).

The introduction of the term war on terror in 2001 had encouraged Sharon’s government to merge the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within a wider context of fighting terrorism (Kelly, 2016). In this regard, it can be affirmed that the ongoing unrest, destabilisation, and most importantly, the lack of pragmatic political resolution between the Palestinians and the Israelis have led to the expansion of the political gap between the two parties, and further complicated the conflict among them. Accordingly, the implications of the second intifada urged
the involvement of an international mediator in the hope of easing the situation between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Saudi Arabia played the role of mediator, beginning a peace initiative in 2002, which required Israel to withdraw from all occupied Arab lands and return to the roadmap of borders assigned to it as per the UN Resolution on 4th of June, 1967 (Qurie, 2015). In addition, Qurie (2015) went on to state that the Saudi Arabian peace initiative required Israel to acknowledge the existence of an independent Palestinian state based on the territories in the West Bank and the Gaza strip whilst, in return, the Arab states would enter a new era of peace with Israel, in which all parties will enjoy regular dealings with each other, and most importantly mark the end of the longstanding Arab-Israeli conflict. The Saudi peace initiative was followed by the Bush administration map to peace that held many hopes to end the Arab-Israeli conflict (Nassar, 2005). However, considering the current situation in Palestinian and the ongoing Arab-Israeli uprisings, it is obvious that both peace initiatives had the same ill-fated outcome.

The peace initiatives were slammed when the Israeli government proposed to build a wall along the occupied Palestinian territories, and that proposal caused a great deal of international outrage (Sparke, 2013). However, Israeli authorities claimed that the intention behind building the wall was to protect Israel and its citizens as well as to strengthen its national security against any terrorist attacks (Jones, 2012). Under those circumstances, the controversial Israeli plan reached the international arena, and considering its potential divisive consequences, the International Court of Justice issued a statement on 9 July, 2004 advising Israel on
the legality of the wall and condemning it as well (Haas, 2014). However, Israel rejected the court’s statement, claiming that the court did not possess jurisdiction to investigate the claims made against the Israeli decision to build the wall, arguing that its creation was to enhance Israel’s national security and protect the Israelis from attacks (Baxter & Akbarzadeh, 2008). Although the court stated that Israel has the right to protect its citizens, it still opposed the response of Israel and described the wall as an attempt by Israel to violate international humanitarian law and further burden the Palestinian right of self-determination (Haas, 2014).

In December 2008 and January 2009, tensions between the Palestinians and Israelis had escalated further and led to a tragic three-week Gaza war, in which 1,200 Palestinians were killed (Han & Rane, 2013; Mitchell, 2013), and up to 295 Israelis were also killed (Weiss, 2011). The conflict reached its peak when Israel conducted severe attacks on the Gaza strip targeting Palestinians in response to the rockets launched by Hamas at Israeli targets (Han & Rane, 2013). Ever since, the clashes between the Palestinians and Israelis continued in various scenarios, especially in 2014, when encroachment by the Israelis on the al-Aqsa mosque occurred, aiming at restricting the religious practices of the Palestinians in Jerusalem (Effarah, 2016). As a result, domestic turmoil has ignited and potentially led to the deplorable knife attacks carried out by Palestinians on several Israelis (Brecher, 2017).

The longstanding history of the socio-political and regional crisis among rivals in the MENA region is still alive and evident in the present time. Foreign interventions, terrorism and extremism on Arab societies as well as the
longstanding Arab-Israeli conflict are examples of this. These matters represent some of the most critical factors that undermine the socio-political and peace progress in the entire MENA region. The worsening of current affairs is staggering, creating civil wars among nations and increasing fear among civilians who become the victims of religious extremism, terrorism and foreign intervention. By the same token, these tensions play a particularly crucial role in placing the region in a long-term crisis, further complicating the future of the region.

A greater responsibility could be taken among regional and Western key players, particularly the U.S., Britain, France and Russia as well as their allies, to listen to the unheard voices in the MENA region and resolve the violence sweeping through it. Alternative socio-political resolutions along with revisiting Western political approaches towards the MENA region are needed, and Habermas’s reading of the current socio-political dilemmas in the MENA region can be of significant value in this regard, considering that these dilemmas remain unresolved to date, and are further extending socio-political fragmentation among people. In this context, Western governments would be encouraged to utilise constructive foreign policies that consider Habermas’s descriptive, interpretive and critically self-reflective intuitions when pragmatically dealing with the politics and social affairs of Arabs. Habermas’s interpretations may influence Western diplomats and politicians to lead the socio-political change by adopting various Habermasian analytical approaches that are outlined in his critical theory and the theory of communicative action. These analytical approaches adhere to various
techniques that include the significant contributions of freedom, rationality, critical reflection and engagement, criticism of ideology, and unrestrained self-determining politics. Hence, the study argues that successive Western governments involved in the MENA region are set to face further political challenges that lie within their foreign policies towards the region, especially without implementing approaches of critical understating and rationality as well as self-reflective and engaging policies towards the Arabs in the MENA region.

The contradictory aspects of observing successive Western governments allying with Israel while at the same time claiming to be peacekeepers without showing substantial support to issues facing Arab nations is a situation for concern. This contradiction between Western foreign policies and claims of holding fair and objective strategies towards conflicts in Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Yemen places further strain on themselves. Therefore, if peace and prosperity are to be granted in the MENA region, the U.S. and Western foreign policies towards the Arabs need to be revisited and revised according the needs and demands of those who reside in that part of the world without imposing Western policies on them. Accordingly, the required modification needs to contain a logical and informative analysis of the socio-political affairs in the MENA region, which will rejuvenate critique and rational thinking among diplomats and politicians and consider them indispensable. Despite this, it seems that Western governments involved in the region are doing the opposite by increasing their military support to the already sophisticated Israeli army, rather than supporting the democracy desired by the Arabs, particularly when it comes to the national elections held in
the MENA region. Having no changes to Western foreign policies towards the MENA region could possibly create further unrest and spread unpredictable forms of terrorism and extremism across the globe. Furthermore, this broadens the non-state and traditional threats made against Arab and Western nations from various terrorist groups including the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Qaeda (Helfont, 2015).

The following section endeavours to shed light on the history of political Islam in the MENA region, the factors that have contributed towards its emergence and popularity among Arab Muslims. Importantly, the following section will apply Habermas’s descriptive, interpretive and critically self-reflective methods of analysis on the concept of political Islam as well as the other relevant socio-political events and the literature directed to interpreting them.

3.3 The Emergence of Political Islam in the MENA Region

Political Islam can be defined as an ideology that calls for the integration of Islam into many aspects of life such as politics, social affairs, economics and civil and constitutional laws (Esposito & Shahin, 2013). Additionally, political Islam and the term Islamism tend to share parallel definitions and ramifications. However, Muslim communities around the world who are primarily concerned with the two terms, have only been familiar with the term Islamism in contemporary times (Chamkhi, 2014). Ayoob (2008: 2) points out that Islamism is “a form of instrumentalisation of Islam by individuals, groups and organisations that pursue political objectives”. For example, when the MB in Egypt uses a slogan such as Islam is the Solution, this indicates that they stand on socio-political
grounds. Additionally, Ayoob (2008) believes that there is another level of extremism where its followers focus on seeing a religious transformation of society and politics that eventually produces a theocracy, an example of which is the Iranian Revolution in 1979 (also known as the Islamic Revolution) which Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini established (Parsa, 2011). The resurgence of religious inspiration in politics has occurred historically in various phases across the globe, and the rise of political Islam in the MENA region is no different. It can be tracked down to the interwar period between 1918-1939, where many intellectual youths had prospects for pragmatic socio-political transitions in the Arab world, but were subsequently disaffected by the outcomes of affairs following that period (Ayubi, 2003). In this regard, Yilmaz (2012) believes that the religiously based socio-political movements rose to the international political stage after the cold war period (1947 - 1991).

Although the notion of having both religion and politics combined can be debated, disputed or agreed upon, it is crucial for contemporary Western diplomats and politicians to be aware of the way non-Westerners perceive the combination of religion and politics across the world, particularly when it comes to the Arab Muslims in the MENA region. In this connection, Roose (2016) stresses that the conceptualisation of political Islam in the Western setting has been comprehended as the application of Sharia law, and the seizure of authority as well. This has led to a major misconception about the definition of political Islam among Westerners, since many Muslims in the Western world view it as a suitable approach that can positively contribute towards a better society and culture through its guiding
philosophies. Bouzarinejad, Zarpeyma, and Marandi (2016) emphasise the importance of understanding the socio-political and economic guidelines along with the ideological elements of political Islam, and their ramifications in contemporary world politics and social affairs.

Despite the reality that Habermas’s critical theory and his theory of communicative action have not been employed to address educational purposes (Lovat, 2013a), both of Habermas’s theories possess the ability to enhance our political understanding of non-Western political ideologies, including the ideology of political Islam in the MENA region. According to Finlayson (2005), to better understand society or culture, Habermas illustrates the differences between traditional and modern societies, in which he states that various common and shared practices, including beliefs and aspirations adopted by members of traditional societies, can grant people access to freely engage in social practices. On the other hand, Habermas believes that modern societies are not guided by similar common and shared practices or other sets of principles that define them, in comparison to traditional societies; therefore, modern societies are more complicated, differentiated and cross-cultural since they do not adhere to the same traditional guidelines. In this connection, Habermas’s theory of communicative action acknowledges the increased pace of social change occurring in modern-day societies, and stresses that these societies demand various cultural resources to cope with such swift social change, which would have caused difficulties to more traditional societies (Habermas, 1991/1993). Consequently, understanding emerging socio-political and religious affairs when proposed by the Arab public
are the building blocks upon which future Arab-West international relations depend.

Developing these building blocks requires inclusive learning resources and critical reflection to reflect and respond to the issues at hand, including political Islam. While a substantial amount of literature has been written on the notion of political Islam, there has been relatively little attention placed on it away from the perceptions of scholars and academics. These insights provide the public with a demonstrated knowledge that cross the boundaries of political Islamic movements, moderation and radicalisation as well as create new forms of theoretical modernisation (Schwedler, 2011). Similarly, there are numerous factors that have contributed to the birth of political Islamic parties throughout the MENA region that seek the implementation of various Islamic socio-political and financial approaches, particularly when dealing with current affairs and international relations. These factors are derived from various socio-political and economic aspects driven by religious leaders and politicians (Stephanous, 2010), and Islamists are frequently inspired by the way Westerners perceive Islam as an alternative opponent, where they believe that the use of Islam as a political ideology can foster their adherents to defeat the West.

The consequences of certain political and military affairs that gripped the MENA region have all contributed towards the rise of political Islam. Therefore, the study argues that there are certain crucial internal and external political and military events that have influenced the adoption of political Islam among Arab Muslims in the MENA region. These events include the fall of Ottoman Empire,
the Western intervention in the affairs of the MENA region, the British Mandate of Palestine, the establishment of the Zionist colonial project in Palestine, the League of Nations decision in 1919, the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration. Additionally, the Arab-Israeli wars and the lopsided Western support, denying the legitimacy of the Palestinian people to practise self-determination, the socio-political failure of existing secular-nationalist Arab governments, and most importantly the dictatorship presented by the authoritarian regimes supported by Western governments involved, have all contributed towards the rise of political Islam. In this connection, Fuller (2003) states that “political Islam is not an exotic and distant phenomenon, but one intimately linked to contemporary political, social, economic and moral issues of near universal concern” (p. XII).

By the same token, it can be stated that political Islam refers to the way Muslims perceive their religion as an inclusive Abrahamic and monotheistic belief system and a way of life that is driven by religious guiding rules and principles that form the Islamic Shari’a law. Shari’a law stems from verses of the Holy Qur’an, and the customs and practices of the prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) deduced by elite Islamic scholars (Warner, 2010). However, in the last two decades, attempts to politically implement Shari’a law have repeatedly led to various controversies and disagreements among nations worldwide. This may be due to the discrepancies in understanding the notion that calls for the establishment of a truthful Islamic governing system that strongly endorses mutual respect and coexistence with all segments of society. Therefore, many Western governments voice their potential concerns over the use of Islam in politics instead of the
practised socio-political and democratic values in Western societies, and hence their reactions tend to hinder any proposals that call for the initialisation of religious Islamic parties in the MENA region.

The pragmatic understanding of political Islam among Western diplomats and politicians tends to have various limitations and a lack of clarity. These limitations arise from several aspects including the misleading coverage of political Islam specifically, and Islam in general within Western mainstream media, whilst linking it to various forms of terrorism, extremism, inequality and oppression. On the other hand, Arab Muslims perceive political Islam differently, due to certain beliefs and Islam’s capacity in promoting social welfare, Islamic financial stability, jurisprudence, along with deep commitments to socio-political affairs and inclusion. The impact that may occur to the wide range of Western geo-strategic and political interests in the MENA region is arguably a factor that drives suspicion among Western authorities, particularly when it comes to supporting the rise of Islamic power through political parties in the region. However, the awareness of the Western governments regarding the subjugation and extortion applied by various ruling regimes in the MENA region places them in an undesirable position that lacks rationality and self-reflection.

These forms of suppression have occurred on the ground in the MENA region, when certain military forces have cracked down on anti-regime protesters, and those who demanded a termination to the epoch of despotic regimes as well. For example, the army of the tyrannical regime of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt intimidated campaigners in the Tahrir square following the beginning of the Arab
Spring in late 2010 (Ramadan, 2012). The clampdowns by Arab governments towards their own people may have led to regional uprisings, civil wars and ideological divisions across the MENA region, creating destabilisation, weakening security and spreading poverty. In this regard, it is worth noting that despite the opportunities given to leading Western governments to reconcile with the Arabs in the MENA region during the Arab Spring, these opportunities were not seized effectively. They further extended the rise of prejudice and suspicion among Arab Muslims towards Western foreign policies. Pragmatically, it can be suggested that a more effective approach for Western governments during that period would have included realistic platforms that welcomed the new political changes in the region, as well as accepted the will of the people, so enhancing future international cooperation based on the surrounding circumstances.

Considering the lack of applicability of Western public diplomacy to function as a soft power, in addition to its fragile foreign policy approaches towards the MENA region, it can be stated that such political approaches will negatively impact on the goodwill of Arab people. As a result, the dissertation suggests that Western foreign policies should skilfully balance economic factors and foster cooperation for winning the hearts of the public, at the expense of Arab autocratic regimes. In this connection, facilitating realistic platforms that comprehend the Arab views towards the desired socio-political reforms could have been more engaging if Habermas’s critical theory and the theory of communicative action were considered in the process of handling the situation. Additionally, the aspects in which the failure of Western governments can be highlighted in
containing the situation in the MENA region are arguably due to the lack of adherence to the will of Arabs, as well as the poor communication strategies and various geo-strategic and self-interest ambitions. In this regard, it is crucial to seek alternative socio-political approaches, and according to this, Habermas’s critical theory and the theory of communicative action can be very useful to enhance the way political Islam is interpreted in the Western setting, eliminating the gap between Western governments and the Arab Muslims in the MENA region.

The significance of Habermas’s theories on the ideology of political Islam can be attributed to their advocacy for freedom to include all members of human society. This advocacy is based on rational thinking, knowing through critical reflection and pragmatic engagement, so opposing imperialism, the inclusion of different thoughts, self-determining politics and the promotion of rationality when concerning mutual communication and effective engagement (Habermas, 1981/1984; Held, 1980; Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002; Joll, 2010; Lovat, 2013a).

The nexus between Islam and international politics, as well as the political uprisings that have been devastating for the MENA region since the end of WW2, continue to worsen between nations and play a part in putting the MENA region in the spotlight (Esposito & Shahin, 2013). For instance, the MENA region is home to one of the longest running conflicts the world has seen in recent times, namely, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The wars that broke out in Iraq between 1991-2003, and still occur to this day, have witnessed a large number of international troops participating and intervening in a conflict that seems to have no boundaries. In this context, the association between conflicting forces and militant groups in the
MENA region with weapon manufacturers and suppliers such as Britain, Russia, and the U.S. raises concerns. It is crucial not to overlook the connection between large and steady economies, in particular the U.S. and Russia and the ongoing unrest and disruption that exist in the MENA region. This connection can be seen through the increase in military expenditures of various Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel, Kuwait and Syria (U.S. Department of State, n.d.), which contributed towards the creation of a highly militarised battleground in the region.

3.3.1 The MB at a Glance

Given the current high-profile discussions in the world regarding political Islam, it is indispensable to explore the history of the MB. The MB as a revivalist and social organisation came into existence in 1928, founded by the Imam and religious teacher, Hassan Al Banna (1906-1949). Al Banna planned and worked towards establishing an Islamic state through transnationalism following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire between 1918-1922 (Chamkhi, 2014). Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Britain came into control of Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine, whilst France took control of Syria and Lebanon. This Western colonisation of the MENA region, the emerging Zionism by Jewish settlers in Palestine supported initially by the British and the French, and the declaration of secularism in Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk stimulated Al Banna to call for a comprehensive role for Islam in opposition to these events (Schirrmacher, 2016). From Al Banna’s viewpoint, it was crucial to re-establish a wide Muslim role in authority in order to resolve issues such as rehabilitation of unity in societies (Al-
Anani, 2012), political weakness, underdevelopment, imperialism and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The MB began to provide logistic and training support to revolutionaries and therefore started to function in Palestine in the 1930s in opposition to the British occupation and the invasion of Jewish Zionist settlers (Hessler, 2012). In this regard, Abu Saud (2015) believes that the British authorities smoothed the path for Zionists and provided them with opportunities to purchase properties in Palestine in order to ultimately increase the number of Zionist ownerships over Palestinian lands. Although Al Banna called for peaceful demonstrations across Egypt and refused to use motivated political aggression, several Egyptian political rulers rushed into accusing the MB of relying on aggression or terrorism in expressing political interest (Chamkhi, 2014). In this context, the MB utilised peaceful approaches and ideologies that segregated the way people lived their lives from religiously politicising it. From a political perspective, the MB sought to freely participate in democratic elections throughout their history, although unproven accusations started storming against them in order to weaken their proposed strategies.

Jamal Abd al-Nasser accused the MB of building a coup to take over authority in the 1960s, while authorities in Egypt used intimidation and tortured MB prisoners despite their absence from revolts (Chamkhi, 2014). Despite the MB’s declaration of anti-violence, the political party is seen internationally as a transnational organisation that ultimately aims at structuring an Islamic state whilst practically shows interest in taking part of democratic transitions (Pargeter, 2013).
Some MB branches had been involved in violent practices and that the MB was wary about showing its moderation ideology that can speak on behalf of all Muslims to Western nations, whilst Bradley (2012) asserts that Islamists took over the Arab Spring.

In examining the historical stages and hardships that have engulfed the MB in Egypt, and towards advocating for a contemporary Islamic approach, a clear emphasis should be placed on the crucial role of Sayyid Qutb. In this connection, Qutb was instrumental in his conceptual contributions that shaped some critical features of MB’s previous and current visions (Soage, 2009). Qutb has been heavily criticised for his interpretation of the ontology of Islam, however his popularity remains largely undiminished, especially among orthodox Muslims. Indeed, there is no shortage of disagreement that Qutb’s interpretations of ontology of Islam have influenced the MB in Egypt and elsewhere. The dedication and enthusiasm that motivated Qutb’s contemporary work on Islamic thought, as well as his subjective views on politics, have been widely admitted and appreciated by many Arabs and Western intellectuals (Ushama, 2014). For example, Calvert (2013) emphasises that Qutb is commonly endorsed in various educational aspects, such as academia and journalism, particularly when it comes to acknowledging his effective role in establishing the theoretical foundations of Islamism during the periods that followed the colonial Sunni Muslim world era.

Bouzarinejad et al. (2016) identify Qutb as a leading predominant intellectual and effective ideological figure for the MB members in various political aspects of Islamic fundamentalism. Hence, in recognition of his
contributions, Qutb was described as “the only thinker who enjoys purity in intellectual methodology and straightforwardness in action” (Barakat, 1972, as cited in Ushama, 2014, p. 216). In this connection, it is significant that all of the above appellations tend to be affirmative. Additionally, it is clear that Qutb influenced the ontology of Islam and its future visualisation. However, the dissertation argues that the exertions of Qutb tend to lack appropriateness for contemporary international relations for both the Arab Muslims and Western diplomats and politicians. By the same token, it is important not to ignore other perspectives on Qutb, especially when acknowledging that some of his contributions regarding Muslim thought and jurisprudence were extreme to a certain extent and lacked tolerance and comprehensiveness. In this regard, several authors have criticised Qutb. For example, Worth (2001) labelled him as being the founder of terrorism.

Qutb’s understanding of Islamic creed has also been slammed, along with his way of differentiating between societies in terms of them being Islamic or ignorant (Ushama, 2014). Condemnations and rejections have also been made against Qutb’s way of understanding secular thoughts, international policies and man-made foreign legislations. Therefore, he was accused of advocating against Western political forces through radical propensities (Irwin, 2001). This form of criticism towards Qutb may indicate a narrow vision of analysing his approach, as it tends to ignore Qutb’s and other’s motives in defending Egypt against foreign interventions such the Suez Crisis, also named the Tripartite Aggression led by Israel, Britain and France, in order to control the strategic Suez Canal in 1956.
(Lahav, 2015). In this context, Qutb was concerned with serious issues impacting Egypt at the time, such as the spread of moral decay and the egotism of Egyptian elites whom he criticised for being irresponsible in defending Egypt from foreign intervention, and for worrying about their own interests (Soage, 2009). For these reasons, Qutb and his fellow Egyptians understood the Suez Crisis as a complete illegitimate Western intervention that aimed to serve their hunger for colonial hegemony in Arab lands. What perhaps made this intervention imperative to Qutb, and the MB members to respond by promoting defensive Islamic Ideologies, is the fact that Britain and France had played a critical role in supporting Jewish settlers from Europe and therefore forming the State of Israel on the land of the Palestinians. Undoubtedly, these perceptions indicate that there is a gap of misunderstanding that needs to be fulfilled between the MB’s approaches and Western perspectives, especially where Arab Muslims are concerned.

3.3.2 The Impact of MB Members During and Post the Arab Spring

During the Arab Spring, the MB senior figures, as well as members of the Ennahda Party in Tunisia extended their willingness to maintain and strengthen Arab-West international relations. Leaders from both political parties met with U.S. and European officials to enhance future cooperation based on mutual respect and common interests (Al-Anani, 2012). Additionally, MB leaders showed commitments to peace and rejected all forms of discrimination and violence towards civilians (Chamkhi, 2014), whilst maintaining their criticism of the U.S. ongoing intervention in Iraq, which they see as an invasion (Abdo, 2000). In this connection, the revolutionary scenes that occurred initially across Tunisia, Egypt,
Libya and Yemen did not have a negative impact on alliance patterns or international relations (Katz, 2014).

On the other hand, Walt (1996) considers that uprisings can facilitate pathways for further destabilisation to take place. Similarly, Ikenberry (2000) and Conge (2000) have supported this position. These authors argue that there will likely be unrest at the beginning of any revolution. This viewpoint can be seen through the ongoing uprisings, civil wars and war crimes committed by dictators, militias or terrorist groups in the MENA region. Within the Arab states, both Tunisia and Egypt supported oppositions in Syria and Libya whilst maintaining their ties with Europe, the U.S. and Russia post the Arab Spring (Katz, 2014). In the case of Egypt, many proposed that the first democratically elected President, Mohamed Morsi, who gained political and media attention, would work immediately on changing Egypt’s foreign policies towards the West (Wilson, 2014). However, this did not eventuate and Morsi maintained Egypt’s close alliance with the U.S. and showed adherence to the Camp David treaty (Katz, 2014). Although the U.S. and European governments showed initial support for oppositions in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia for peaceful transitional basis, they have not shown full willingness to support Sunni oppositions in Syria (Katz, 2014). This may have been due to the outcomes of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions where followers of the MB’s ideologies took charge after winning the national democratic elections, and the fear was that the same scenario may occur in Syria. In this connection, Katz (2014) emphasises that although the MB won the Egyptian election, repeated military presence continued to dominate politics.
Although well known for its abundance of natural resources and large petroleum fields, the MENA region has historically (and continues) to struggle with economic crises and high unemployment rates that are deteriorating living conditions, escalating tensions with ruling governments and exhausting people (Robbins & Jamal, 2016). Simultaneously, social institutions that produce social justice, fair opportunities and impartiality to all individuals (Bell, 2007) somehow diminished from Arab societies. Injustice, humiliation, poverty, lack of education and mutual respect, low democratic standards and the dwindling of security and protection are contributing to the potential for long-term destabilisation in the region. Therefore, various governments in the MENA region have clashed with Islamic opponents that call for socio-political reforms, such as the Algerian Civil War between 1991 and 2002, the Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya (Islamic group) revolt in Egypt from 1992-1998, and the Grand Mosque seizure in Saudi Arabia, 1979.

In contrast, other Arab governments resisted their own military forces such as the Ramadan Revolution in Iraq, 1963, the Moroccan coup attempt in 1971, and the Syrian coup d'état during 1966 (Sorli, 2005). Those internal conflicts would not have occurred if ruling governments were politically capable and engaging with society. According to Joll (2010), Habermas’s critical theory presents a serious model of rational understanding to Arab ruling governments as it profoundly protects the freedom of all members of society to express, demand, alter or reject any socio-political notions regardless of any given timeframe or imposed pressures. However, instead of Arab ruling governments improving their policies and public services, political conflicts were created around the MENA region as a
result of their incapacity and lack of rationality (Lesser, Nardulli & Arghavan, 1998). This ongoing unrest in the region has attracted the attention of the U.S., as the region is seen as a geostrategic concern for successive U.S. governments. In this connection, Lesser et al. (1998), associate the ongoing unrest with issues of national security, energy security, emerging conflicting forces, the protection of Israel, and promoting the peace process through political dialogues.

Considering the current ebb and flow of the Arab political approaches presented in the recent Gulf crisis, it can be argued that there are various socio-political and regional conflicts looming on the horizon, creating further socio-political uncertainty of regional Arab affairs, religious ideologies and most importantly, deepening the gap between Arab-West international relations. In this connection, during the holy month of Ramadan in early June 2017, the Arab world woke up to a shocking socio-political tipping point. This tipping point surprised many observers, specifically when Egypt and other Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain proclaimed officially to sever their diplomatic ties with the geographically small and oil-rich State of Qatar. The quartet of Arab nations accused Qatar unanimously of funding various terrorist and extremist groups as well as having affiliation patterns with Iran (“Qatar vows no surrender as Gulf crisis deepens”, 2017). This was followed by an embargo that banned goods from entering Qatar through its only land border with Saudi Arabia, in addition to enforcing air and sea trade restrictions and a travel ban by the neighbouring Gulf countries.
Qatari citizens along with diplomatic missions were given a timeframe to leave Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt ("Five things to know about the Qatar-Gulf rift," 2017). Internationally, the current President of the U.S., Donald Trump intervened through urging Qatar to stop its financial support to terrorist organisations, whilst supporting the decision taken by fellow neighbouring Gulf nations and Egypt. In this context, Trump’s call was contradictory in its nature to what has been included in a statement issued by the U.S. cabinet officials, in which they described the embargo on Qatar as damaging and counterproductive (Al-Bayati, 2017). Furthermore, former U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson acknowledged the negative impact of the Gulf crisis on the U.S., and hence, conducted several visits to Qatar, Saudi Arabia and mediator Kuwait in order to soften the disputes and find a diplomatic resolution through negotiations. On the other hand, Qatar has furiously refused the allegations made by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt; although it has supported certain Islamist groups which have been labelled by several Arab and Western countries as terrorist groups, such as the MB and Hamas (Schreck & Lederman, 2017).

Qatar admits to providing financial aid to Islamic groups, including the MB and Hamas, which it does not label as terrorist groups, however, it firmly rejects supporting any militants affiliated with Al-Qaeda or ISIL ("Qatar crisis: What you need to know", 2017). Additionally, Qatar has refused the demands of fellow Arab nations, stating that intervening in its foreign policies is an objectionable attempt to undermine its sovereignty (Schreck & Lederman, 2017). However, the dispute between Qatar and the neighbouring Arab nations is not purely about their
differing political approaches, but is more about distorting the ideology of political Islam among the Arabs, and persuading them about the inadequacy of political Islam through mainstream media affiliated with the quartet nations. Additionally, the quartet of Arab nations tend to utilise the pressures and misconceptions that are common in the Western setting, including terrorism, extremism and the potential violence of political Islamic parties in the MENA region, in order to push their own socio-political agendas that are ultimately seeking to safeguard the Sheikdoms in the Arabian Peninsula.

The decision to impose the embargo on the State of Qatar is a dangerous decision in all its socio-political and ideological dimensions, considering its context in an already volatile region. Therefore, it is arguable that the Gulf dispute is in fact a conflict of political thought that has been implemented within some Arabian regimes to conquer people’s will and impose additional despotic practices on the Arabs. It can be stated that the quartet nations, along with Qatar, would do well to consider various Habermasian forms of rationality, mutual respect, effective engagement, effective communication and self-reflective methods of criticism when making socio-political decisions.

What also raises doubts about the Gulf crisis is the fact that the tiny oil-rich State of Qatar was the only Arab country punished by fellow Arab nations. The quartet nations justify their approaches towards Qatar as they see Qatar as one of the very few Arab countries to support the Arab Spring since it began, and continue to back political Islam and other political Islamic parties, which Qatar considers as liberating movements from despotic Arab regimes.
In this regard, as Arab ruling regimes, along with Western governments involved in the MENA region, encounter a deteriorating willingness to pragmatically engage in rational dialogues with the public, there is a necessity for them to seek alternative socio-political and regional ambitions. This can be done through developing dynamic platforms for the Arabs to effectively engage, interact and discuss various important matters through shared dialogues. These dialogues must be protected by a suitable democratic, moral and rational public sphere, since socio-political experiments indicate that when governments practice despotism, and are less likely to engage in rational dialogues, the institutional structure of democratic society will be negatively affected (Finlayson, 2005).

Institutions that seek to thoroughly guard people from sinking into any form of political extremism or falling into the desolation of prosperous capitalist economy will potentially avoid experiencing various socio-political and religious challenges (Finlayson, 2005). In various socio-political and religious cases, the meaning of human society of Arab Muslims in the MENA region should not be overlooked. Hence, respecting human society provides multiple advantageous aspects, including the exchange of good reasons through reciprocal negotiations, which would ultimately assist in reaching mutual understanding of all related and discussed socio-political and religious topics. Therefore, Habermas’s intuitions regarding the establishment of pragmatic platforms that enhance the significance of human interaction, rationality and mutual understanding, along with the consideration of cultural and religious sensitivity are crucial for improved Arab-West international relations. Furthermore, Habermas’s insights can play a
significant role to potentially consolidate Arab-West international relations, especially when religion and politics are concerned. As a result, Habermas’s philosophical notions can assist in transforming the Arab Muslim communities via knowing through critical reflection and engagement, or praxis that potentially visualises the socio-political ambitions of the Arab Muslims in the MENA region.

The following section endeavours to utilise ontological perspectives presented by existing contemporary Islamic thought and knowledge regarding international relations and apply these perspectives to Arab-West international relations for reconciliation efforts. Additionally, the proceeding of the following will explore interpretations of social realities along whilst applying various Habermasian epistemological insights as well as self-reflective analysis against the relevant socio-political events and the literature directed to interpreting them.

3.4 Reconciling and Integrating the Arab-West International Relations

Considering the ebb and flow of Arab-West international relations in light of regional conflicts, various measures have been used to mediate between political Arab-West international relations from a philosophical and theoretical perspective (Alruwaih, 2014). However, methods of Western international relations theory of engagement have had limitations. These methods emanate primarily from the philosophical foundations of international relations, avoiding any reference to ontological grounds (Alruwaih, 2014). International relations theory (IRT) has been criticised as being relatively Eurocentric (Hobson, 2012) biased and limited to certain extents, and that it has been specifically devised to present the West as the ideal normative source for world politics, and promote it
over other political initiatives derived from non-Western cultures. Equally important, the origins of IRT raise concerns over its noticeable deficiency in addressing political affairs internationally (Acharya & Buzan, 2010).

Although dialogue is a powerful tool for progress in international relations, it is not a unitary concept. This can be seen in various circumstances where dialogue does not bring expectations of pluralism into IRT. Conversely, it can be stated that Western theories and policies related to diplomacy and international relations function effectively, especially when applied on Western societies. As a result, these theories and policies do not respond to the demands of Arab Muslims in the MENA region. In this connection, the variations that exist in the culture of politics among Arab and Western states need to be taken into pragmatic consideration as these variations play essential roles in the current and future bilateral arrangement between the two sides. This notion is crucial in order to accomplish the potentially strengthened Arab-West international relations based on social sympathy, multilateralism, and comprehensive agreement about interests, qualities, and expectations.

By calling for pragmatic socio-political, cultural, religious dialogues and shared engagement, Arab and Western societies can change an inheritance of agony, creating more profound information, practical comprehension of present open doors and perils, and persisting reason for social peace, national security, critical reflection and effective communication. In this context, it is valuable to note that Western policymakers along with diplomats and politicians need to undertake an educational program in which they get to learn about the differences
of real religious teachings, portrayed teachings and myths in order to understand the real stance of Arab Muslims. In this connection, the knowledge gained will help Western representatives to rethink the strategies that can be widely accepted by Arab-Muslims in the MENA region. Therefore, rational demonstrations of culture and Islam are pivotal for Western diplomats and politicians to address the requirements of Arab-Muslims and work for their betterment.

The depth of understanding of Arab Muslim culture, socio-economic status and mindsets will be more helpful in devising new policies and strategies rather than having experiments. In this connection, the Western international relation theory of engagement can be a perspective to follow here for devising a new educational training program for Western diplomats and politicians by relying on commonly shared perspectives (Esposito, 1999). Hence, it is crucial to set up strategic cooperation and exchange programs, trials of endurance and ingenuity, maintain credibility and flexibility, decrease tensions, inculcate dialogue and mutual respect, accomplish incremental agreements and create constructive platforms for peaceful relations. These are important elements that can be applied in future Western diplomatic training programs in order to acquire a healthy worldwide family association.

Such elements can be also enhanced in the Western setting by clarifying deeply that Islam is the religion which has always guided the good activities to its followers and endorsed charity, forgiveness, tolerance, honesty, kindness, justice, fulfilment of the promise, decent speech, trustworthiness, patience, truth, anger management, sincerity, and mutual respect. Hence, training Western diplomats and
politicians according to such elements is necessary, considering the capabilities of the Western world; hence, it falls within the Western responsibility to maintain a sense of harmony in the world by establishing relations based on understanding, reflection and effective engagement with non-Western societies. This is of high significance as well for Arab Muslims since the MENA region needs capable Western diplomats and politicians who can help the region to progress internationally and develop strong strategies for economic and cultural growth for the region.

3.4.1 The Role of Habermas’s Intuitions and Contemporary Islamic Thought

Integrating world politics into a Habermasian understanding of democracy as illustrated in Habermas’s critical theory can assist in expanding the circle of global political knowledge, considering Habermas’s affirmation on the importance of the institutional structure of democratic society that prevents people from getting influenced by various forms of political extremism (Finlayson, 2005). According to Goldgeiger and McFaul (1992), the modern understanding of favourable standards of life exists within the Western lifestyle, whereby democracy, social cohesion and role of law are considered indispensable, compared to non-Western nations (as cited in Acharya & Buzan, 2010). However, Goldgeiger and McFaul’s understanding of contemporary life may undermine rationality and restrict other non-Western nations from practising their own standards of living quality that consider cultural sensitivity, appropriateness and socio-political progress in governing their nations according the will of people.
This understanding seems to contradict Habermas’s critical theory and the interpretation of Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) that call for a pragmatic comprehension of human society and acknowledgment of all liberties and demands concerning members of society. Hence, for the purpose of clarifying non-Western socio-political approaches towards international relations, the dissertation illustrates what is meant by ontology in a global context in order to reconcile and integrate Arab-West international relations.

In this regard, Paipais (2017) indicates that various philosophers from the post-Heideggerian Left such as Badiou and Laclau perceive ontology as a well-acknowledged and defined method that aims at dissecting the roots of political organisations and democratic institutions, reigniting the inactive social powers and ultimately reactivating forms of political opposition to global capitalism. Additionally, Blaikie (2007) demonstrates that ontology can be illustrated as an examination of what exists in terms of realities and the way individuals believe and construe what erects certainties. In other words, the abilities of individuals to utilise ontological commitments when discussing a domain of discourse as a communication tool, without the necessity of utilising a universal shared scheme. These demonstrations serve as a stimulus to pragmatically utilise Habermas’s concept of public sphere as illustrated by Jacobson et al. (2017), whereas democratic politics, rationality, interaction, discussion and debate are the true objects of an ontological public sphere along with rational members of society for improved socio-political exertions.
In the Arab-West international relations context, confusion and misinterpretations of various socio-political affairs seem to restrict the pragmatic action that would enhance the fragile Arab-West international relations. This suggests that a knowledge-based framework through gathering knowledge and awareness from trustworthy resources needs to be established, particularly when Islam and the Holy Qur’an are associated with it (Baqai, Basharat, Khalid, & Hassan, 2009). This interpretation is supported by Newell (1982), who emphasises that ontological commitments have to be based on knowledge-level perspectives, as the notion of knowledge sensibly begins prior to that of representation. Therefore, it is crucial to clarify what has existed previously in order for the latter to avoid confusions and misinterpretations (Newell, 1982).

In this context, the ontology of Islam refers to existing contemporary Islamic thoughts and knowledge on international relations that political Western policies can perhaps adopt and employ. Producing appealing human agency within contexts of international relations is important for increasing the knowledge of Western diplomats and politicians towards the socio-political affairs of the Arab Muslims in the MENA region. The intended human agency is cross-cultural, transcends religions and ethnic differences and brings different schools of thought together. As an illustration, Steigerwald (2005) emphasises the role of productive Islamic literature, including the work of the Ashʿarī school of theology during the golden age of Islamic literature, whereas accommodating different schools of thought acquired appreciation and was subject to ongoing enhancement accordingly. By the same token, the exigency to have a contemporary human
agency is crucial to bridging the gap between different socio-political notions. This is why Held (1980) emphasises the eagerness of Habermas’s intuitions and advocacy to facilitate a unique theoretical platform for various schools of thought to function together in order to enhance the orthodox way of exploration and transformation and promote criticism of ideology.

The right of entry to a wide variety of Islamic thought on international relations has the potential to enrich the objectives of political international relations researchers who seek to determine improved development methods of global relations. Furthermore, historical and contemporary Islamic thoughts on international relations can assist Western diplomats and politicians to better understand the importance of Islam to the Arabs and comprehend the ramifications behind the ideology of political Islam as seen through the associated supporters of that ideology. For example, Tariq Ramadan, one of the most prominent Muslim intellectuals living today, tends to pragmatically perceive political Islam and utilises it for clarifying the misconceptions and misinterpretations surrounding it to Westerners. However, Ramadan believes that the disapproval of the ideology behind political Islam and the denial of its supporters is historical as well as intentional in the West, and that the Western support for dictators in the MENA region dates back to the very beginning of the 20th century (Ramadan, 2012). Accordingly, Ramadan’s perspective indicates that there is a real questionable matter of misunderstanding among Westerners towards political Islam and its agenda, as well as a necessity to addressing it pragmatically on the international stage.
It is crucial to rectify what seems to be an increasing socio-political gap between various Islamic political actors in the MENA region and involved Western governments, such as the U.S., Britain, France and Russia. In this connection, Ramadan (2012) stresses that Western governments have thoroughly studied the political Islamic movements in the MENA region and the factors behind their emergence, but have to this point changed nothing. Ramadan (2012) goes on to state that the reality surrounding the presentation of political Islam among Arab Muslims in the MENA region cannot be denied, and that Western governments are yet to face this reality and respond to it decisively. This would be by declaring their ambiguous support for dictatorships in the MENA region or supporting the will of the people and working on strengthening it.

Pondering on the devastating political disturbances and civil wars in the MENA region since 2003, and considering the extent of pursuits for political solutions by certain Western governments, and their consequences, it would seem that the historical record of Western interventions in the MENA region during this time has to be seen as a colossal failure. The catastrophic sequence of events due to obvious inabilities to find even preliminary solutions to ongoing conflicts is most apparent (Bew, 2014). Perhaps in the future, when accounts of these current times are transcribed, the West will be seen as confronting a massive security problem with irrational strategies and failing in containing it (Juncos & Whitman, 2015). In addition, the security complications lie within the emergence of certain terrorist and extremist groups such as ISIL or Daesh, which is committing horrifying atrocities against inhabitants of the territories under their control,
including Muslims (Patten, 2015; Shokri, 2016). This terrorist group has misused and misrepresented Islam through many forms of violence, which is in stark contrast to the peaceful and tolerant ideologies of Islam (Miqdad, 2015).

In contrast to such extremist ideologies, it is important to point out that the term Islam in itself is derived from the Arabic triliteral verb, that is, S-L-M, which translates into various concepts, including unity, submission, sanctuary, and peace (The Egyptian Society, n.d.). Additionally, Allah (SWT) says: “Servants of Allah the most Compassionate are those who walk on earth in modesty and if ignorant people address them, they say, ”Peace.” (Quran 25:63). In another verse, Allah (SWT) says: “Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it was thy friend and intimate!” (Quran 41:34). In other words, the teachings of Islam provide conceivable options between community members that can be integrated into international relations, including peace, forgiveness, critical reflection, mutual respect, and effective engagement with others. Amongst these platforms, Islam contends that peace is the first premise and rejects the possibility of endless war among Islamic and non-Islamic countries as embraced via Jihadist groups which have raised apprehension among protective establishments and non-Islamic political and group pioneers. In this connection, Islam emphasises that peace and sociability are the core purposes for human connection, and not warfare.

This perception contends that the claims of extremist groups are unwarranted and not upheld via respected Muslim intellectuals. Therefore, it can be suggested that Western diplomats and politicians need to understand how to
collectively contemplate and accommodate the valid interpretations of Islamic
teachings to infer the genuine comprehension, and subsequently convey their
perceptions into the Western setting. Notwithstanding, it is important for Western
diplomats and politicians to grasp that the investigation of verses on jihad in Islam
has to be no longer detached from the chronicled setting of the time they had been
revealed and its context.

Future Western socio-political researchers need to contain the chaos that
has occurred due to lack of rational thinking and the absence of engaging Western
foreign policies towards Arab Muslims in the MENA region. This may suggest
that the process of shifting inefficient approaches towards political Arab-Western
international relations may need to be re-established based on ontological thoughts
related to socio-political and religious understanding. In this regard, the
significance of a contemporary ontological approach can be seen through many
theories of contemporary human thought through cross-cultural engagement. For
example, it is clear that thoughts precede the performing of deeds, regardless of
their accuracy (AbuSulayman, 1991/1993). This particular notion suggests that
initial intellectual understanding of political objectives and their implications on
international relations is fruitful if not necessary. Hence, commitments to a
cohesive understanding need to be made by academics, researchers, diplomats,
politicians, governments and leaders once the essence of those political
international objectives is identified. To demonstrate further, it is indispensable to
utilise contemporary ontological approaches that depend solely on methods of
rational interaction and effective engagement. This can be achieved through the
application of Habermas’s epistemologies, particularly when conducting political
dialogues and negotiations between Arab Muslims and Western diplomats and
politicians.

This notion is strongly supported by Freundlieb et al. (2004) who stress the
significance of Habermas’s critical theory through self-understanding, rationality
and pragmatic engagement in order to create the necessary platforms for
compelling communication, rationale and self-criticism. Arguably, this is in fact
what is missing among Western diplomats and politicians when particularly
conducting socio-political dialogues and negotiation with their Arab Muslims
counterparts. In this context, there is perhaps a fundamental element that is causing
confusion in interpreting the Arab-Western relations, and that is the failure of
certain Western governments to distinguish between those dictatorships that lead
to division and destabilisation and those that promote a measure of social justice
and resilience. On the other hand is the will of the people that is ultimately more
influential. For this reason, the will of the people needs to be at the heart of
political dialogues and socio-cultural initiatives in order to construct bridges
between the Arab Muslims, including their political leaders in the MENA region,
as well as diplomats and politicians in the Western world. This suggests that
Western superpowers, as well as Russia, can heavily impact on and determine who
survives out of the ruling governments in the MENA region, and where
replacement should occur (Byman, 2013b). This interpretation suggests that there
is an evolving necessity for Western diplomats and politicians to refer to what is
described by Habermas as a *historical hermeneutic*. Such a hermeneutic is one in
which political actors and negotiators get pragmatic opportunities to address socio-political affairs by depending on forms of subjective interaction with the entire body represented by all political members involved, rather than referring exclusively to the cognitive action or inter-subjective experience of others influenced by different socio-political implications (Lovat, 2004).

Indeed, the influence of the West and Russia in certain parts of the MENA region can be seen through the ongoing political and military catastrophes in Syria, where the Syrian regime led by dictator Bashar Al-Assad is still surviving, despite convictions of war crimes against Syrian civilians (Ahmad, 2016). However, if Western governments were serious about restoring democracy and social justice in the MENA region, as they claim, an urgent understanding of people’s voices and their desires for political reforms is necessary. Furthermore, an understanding of the ontology of Islamic thoughts is needed since it is the foundational intellect of the Muslim nation or ummah in Arabic, and this is because Islam is the key that encourages or discourages the Muslim ummah from proceeding with any spontaneous public affairs and commitment (AbuSulayman, 1991/1993).

Additionally, Islam is seen as the root of competency, at least to its proponents, and chances for ruling authorities in the MENA region to persist cannot be obtained without applying certain forms of attribution to it (Swansinger & Shehata, 2015).

In this context, it has been conclusively shown that Islam as a divine religion appraises humans by taking into consideration their good deeds regardless of religion, race and cultural background (Miqdad, 2015). Having this in mind, an
understanding of the ontology of Islamic thought may be the basis to construct Arab-West international relations based on contemporary political dialogues that present political Islam as an enlightening comprehensive proxy that seeks socio-political reforms, and not a roadblock to the Western world and its socio-cultural advancements (Swansinger, 2015). Such ontology can perhaps guide through agreed processes of Islamic engagement ethics and teachings. Interestingly, the applicability of the Islamic thought can be found in the Islam’s (2013) comparative and reflective study that differentiates between Western and Islamic models of bioethics.

Islam’s study shows that the Western approach of bioethics is a rational, secular and philosophical approach compared to the Islamic version that relies heavily on the guidance of the Holy Qur’an and the teachings of Sunnah, all under the umbrella of spiritual understanding. However, the Islamic approach provides an applicable and reasonable replacement that could challenge the domination of the secular interpretation of bioethics through its divine teachings. For this reason, there is undoubtedly a significance that can be derived from this comparative study for stressing the validity of political Islamic thought via a moral approach in other fields of analysis, including Arab-West international relations. This moral approach can be effectively utilised for scrutinising the actions and decisions of political actors in a divine spiritual sense and hold them liable. This spiritual scrutiny when applied and supported rationally could have a stronger influence upon the socio-political and religious affairs concerning the Arab Muslims over its secular or Western guidelines. This can be justified when taking into consideration
the strong belief system of Muslims who spiritually contemplate the wisdom and righteousness of the divine revelation of God, the framework for their own understanding of the socio-political issues at hand.

There is a significant feature in the Islamic religion that lies within its comprehensiveness in combining spirituality along with secularism in a reflective life manner. According to Maududi (2005), Islam accentuates the deep-rooted ambition of its teachings in enhancing the standard of living for all community members and securing peace, satisfaction and welfare to make this world a better place. Additionally, Islam strongly considers the sacred status of humans and their role in fulfilling this universe with the pillars needed for stronger individuals, and thus stronger communities Maududi (2005). This understanding can be effective for Western diplomats and politicians in understanding the true moral, religious, socio-political and economic concepts of the religion of Islam.

According to Islamic interpretations, Allah (SWT) has enriched humans with the competence to think, reflect and comprehend rationally, and has given them the strength to differentiate between righteousness and baseness, whilst maintaining the ability to utilise all the resources given to them in order to improve the living conditions of all humans (Maududi, 2005). In other words, Allah (SWT) stresses the importance of self-reflectivity by ordering all humans to must not think that they are unquestionable since this earth is not in fact their own perpetual residence; hence, they are held accountable based on their actions (Maududi, 2005). These Islamic interpretations of the scheme of life rejuvenates the correlation between the contemporary understanding of life affairs along with
Habermas’s critical theory and his theory of communicative action in dealing with the cognitive interests in life. In addition, this is in accordance with Habermas’s reading of the way the human mind works along with the effective engagement and communication needed for all members of society in order to generate an emancipation.

This leads to providing various methods of knowing based on critical or self-reflective approaches for understanding the socio-political and religious affairs in a rational and reflective manner (Lovat, 2013a). In the context of contemporary political Islamic international relations, it can be understood that the chief characteristics of Islam seek to ensure that the life of people must be constructed according to two Islamic terms: *ma’rufat* (good) and *munkarat* (evils). The term *ma’rufat* can be defined as the qualities accepted by the human conscience; conversely, the term *munkarat* pinpoints the qualities that have been proven to be rejected, ill-fated by the nature of humans and considered *evil* (Maududi, 2005). Therefore, Maududi (2005) argues that the *ma’rufat* go naturally in line with human nature, whilst the *munkarat* remain against it. This understanding tends to restore the significance of applying Habermas’s epistemological theory of knowing that advocates for various constructive concepts, including rationality, critical thinking and benevolent reflection that can potentially enhance the rostrum of contemporary thought for a more interdependent consideration of social matters (Lovat, 2013a). Additionally, it can be stated that blending these constructive concepts of Habermas on the ideology of political Islam can be fruitful, especially for creating a reflective platform and self-criticism.
Evidence in support of this position can be found in the high profile of socio-economic development of Al-Andalus that was governed by Islamic authorities who implied comprehensiveness of social justice, open-mindedness and democracy (Lovat, 2007). In this connection, Corfis (2009) demonstrates the historical context of Al-Andalus in focus by indicating the popularity of such a magnificent Arab-Islamic civilisation in terms of its sophisticated contributions to modern-day Spain and Portugal. As a result, researchers can be rapidly exposed to a vast range of resources and over two million entries, ranging from religious, cultural, educational, touristic and artistic aspects. For Corfis, there are two major topics that come to mind, particularly when discussing topics related to Al-Andalus; its historical and current implications on contemporary world politics and social affairs. In this connection, these two primary topics lie within the idealisation of and the regenerated interests in the historical socio-political and religious affairs of Al-Andalus.

Corfis (2009) and Alkhateeb (2014) argue that the Jewish communities in Al-Andalus, under the Islamic leadership had enjoyed a harmonious and tolerant coexistence, and were able to freely participate in the socio-political and religious affairs than what they experienced under the European Christian leadership. Moreover, a harmonious and culturally diverse civilisation was brought to light under banner of Islam in Al-Andalus, where Arabs, Berbers and Hispanic Muslims, Christians, Jews and others had all began to understand and appreciate the teachings of Islam along with the Arabic language (Alkhateeb, 2014).
In addition, the 9th to 13th centuries marked a significant and historical period of advanced scientific, spiritual, philosophical and cultural advances that had never been witnessed across the globe. This view is strongly supported by Daiber (2012) who believes that the philosophical aspects of Islam present to the world one of the greatest examples of a universal discourse that is fully capable to constructively comprehend diversity, socio-political affairs, religions and the plurality of values as well as the ability to maintain its cultural heritage whilst implementing forms of modernity. In this connection, Daiber (2012) went on to illustrate that the philosophy of Islam supports intercultural dialogues, leads to the acceptance and understanding of different schools of thought and can effectively function in multicultural nations in a way that comprehends the significance of different thoughts and implements them accordingly.

In the context of global understanding, it can be of significance to Western diplomats and politicians to expand their awareness about historical and modern Islam and visualise what it can offer in terms of bridging gaps between different schools of thought, supporting rationality and strengthening critical reflection. This interpretation indicates that in a society where people understand, respect and value different viewpoints, freedom, rationality and self-criticism can be created for the interest of that society. Therefore, developing a logical understanding of the core value of Islamic thought is pivotal for Western diplomats and politicians to visualise the way Arab Muslims view the ideology of political Islam, and why they support it over the ambiguous secular and autocratic Arab regimes in the MENA region. In this connection, Habermas’s theories can be constructively utilised to
strengthen the roots of political Islamic thought by promoting freedom in a wider context to involve to all members of communities, facilitating platforms for rational thinking and critical reflection through pragmatic methods of engagement (Habermas, 1981/1984; Held, 1980; Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002; Joll, 2010; Lovat, 2013a).

Given the example of a prosperous Al-Andalus, it remains quite challenging to determine current pragmatic political Islamic approaches that can compete with rising socio-political and democracy demands among Arab Muslims in the MENA region (Jabroun, 2013). Although, this does not necessarily mean that the current circumstances and foreign polices of political Islamic parties, when compared to the historical Islamic leadership in Al-Andalus, are inappropriate for such a desirable transition to take place, but rather to say that contemporary Islamic politicians and parties have to get involved in extensive international relations assessments that measure their capabilities and perceptions in order to take up such challenges through historical and effective political Islamic thought. Therefore, a well-structured international relations theory that emanates from considerations of political Islamic thought and other Habermasian intuitions can be fruitful if not necessary to reconcile the fragile Arab-West international relations. The proposed theory must contain comprehensive, ambitious and capable elements of rationality, effective interaction, pragmatism and critical reflection that provide grounds for improved Arab and Western diplomatic and political international relations. Each of these theoretical elements makes an important contribution to our rational understanding of Islamic ontology. Hence, it is vital to put this idea
into action and then work towards identifying its visions, approaches, procedures and implications. To underline the point further, awareness of emerging socio-political and religious matters in the Arab nations in the MENA region, and the implementation of these theoretical elements, seem to provide contemporary platforms for Western diplomats and politicians to utilise Habermas’s critical theory and its intuitions to further understand the significant conceptual aspects of criticism of ideology, rationale and self-determining politics that are free from the scrutiny and influence of autocratic regimes (Held, 1980). Furthermore, Habermas’s theory of communicative action tends to recognise the swift socio-political and religious reforms and demands that could occur in modern-day societies. The theory also seeks to address these reforms and demands pragmatically by depending on a wide range of scholarly resources. (Habermas, 1991, 1993).

3.4.2 Interpretations of Social Realities

The rational comprehension of socio-cultural backgrounds and history is without a doubt an influential factor in the way people reflect on their knowledge and perceive social realities. In addition, such a comprehension tends to help humans in determining the potential type of discussion, or emphasis that is going to occur between individuals, or groups when interacting with each other. This is because possessing a rational comprehension whilst expecting contradictory viewpoints on the same social realities that are being discussed can reduce forms of misunderstandings (Demoulin, Leyens & Dovidio, 2009). In this context, social realities can be defined as practices that train and enlighten people on how to
observe, interpret and understand social matters whilst anticipating opposing interpretations. Furthermore, according to Beck (1979), the main attribute to social science “is to understand the social reality as different people see it and to demonstrate how their views shape the action which they take within that reality” (as cited in Wale, 2003, p. 153). It then follows that examining ontological distinctions is a key step in conducting research.

There are numerous possible clarifications to justify the significance of that social reality. For example, ontological distinctions tend to provide the investigator with a clearer comprehension of how revealing social truths can be influenced according to the nature of the vision of human beings (David & Sutton, 2004). Additionally, ontological distinctions are significant components of understanding how social sciences operate according to people’s faith, educational backgrounds, cultural diversity, lifestyles and traditions. By the same token, social realities can be seen as collaborative and combined processes where individuals engage together in order to comprehend the purpose of their lives (Bracken, 2010). Similarly, it is possible to address realties through stringent interpretations of people’s intentionality. Such ways of interpreting realities may empower minds to function effectively, away from the confusions encountered through their intentions. As a result, people will have the convenience to form decisions based on the way they see things, then implementing them according to their perspectives that ultimately shape the actions desired within the context of that reality. This is in line with the way various socio-political thinkers, including Habermas, perceive the human mind and the way it functions, particularly when all
members of society engage, discuss, debate and communicate in constructive and rational manners. This way of communication leads to creating forms of emancipated approaches of knowing that utilise methods of rationality and critical reflection for understanding contemporary socio-political and religious affairs (Lovat, 2013a). In addition, this interpretation can also be applied upon the Muslim mind since Islam is naturally considered to be the sound core of the ummah’s thought that relies on Islamic ontology through socio-political realities and other surrounding circumstances. In this connection, Al ’Alwani (1993) indicates that there is a reasonable amount of literature that has been produced on the issues of Islamic thought and the construction of the Arab Muslim mind (as cited in AbuSulayman, 1991/1993). For this reason, AbuSulayman (1991/1993) stresses that the Islamic ontology remains capable of providing constructive socio-political and religious practices in order to consolidate the fragile Arab-West international relations. In support of the use of Islamic ontologies in public affairs, and to show its significance in the Muslim mind, AbuSulayman (1991/1993) states:

Undoubtedly, rectifying the methodology of Islamic thought, returning to the roots of the matter, moving from the particular to the general, treating the causes of the problem rather than the symptoms, and advancing general principles and axioms, all in accordance with the teachings of Islam, are the guarantees for the success and correctness of the process of change in thought that will enable the ummah to put its feet on the right path. (pp. x-xi)
According to AbuSulayman’s perspective, it seems that such a strategic and cooperative approach, as explained above, could offer common understanding between Western foreign policies and the voices of Arab Muslims who make up the majority in the MENA region. These voices of majority see the future transition of dictatorships across the MENA region into democratically elected governments via comprehensive dialogues based on mutual respect and common interests between Arab-West relations. Nevertheless, AbuSulayman (1991/1993) asserts that although the Islamic thought is capable of achieving beneficial objectives, it remains a reality that various orthodox Islamic scholars have rejected the notion of reason and its important role in social affairs by solely depending on literal and descriptive interpretations of Islamic resources. This orthodox way of grasping knowledge has negatively contributed towards limiting the progress of the Islamic thought and imposing uncertainty on the procedures of rational inquiry.

This is of importance to Western governments led by diplomats and politicians to comprehend in order to determine future solutions of understanding that construct bridges for Arab-West international relations. However, the proposed way of comprehension and the motivations of Western reactions towards the socio-political reforms and the demands of Arab Muslims during the Arab Spring have been obscure (Byman, 2013b). In this connection, Morrison (2015) emphasises the contradictions surrounding the Western response to the Arab Spring that initially welcomed the awakening of Arabs in the MENA region, the emergence of democracy and the fall of dictatorship and despotic regimes. The Western response to the Arab Spring was swiftly withdrawn when a number of
political Islamic parties became eager to take part in the Arab Spring; hence hesitation and uncertainty began to unfold among Western political observers.

This can be seen through a rational analysis of the outcomes of a few Arab revolutions, such as in Tunisia 2010 and Egypt 2011 accordingly. The outcome for both revolutions against dictatorships, despotism and subjugation witnessed a remarkable rise of political Islamic parties (Al-Anani, 2012). Arguably, these parties were not given the sufficient time or opportunity to prove their national strategies and foreign relations with international communities. For example, although Mohamed Morsi became the first democratically elected president in Egypt, his affiliation with the MB led to a short term in office, less than 13 months, before he was ousted by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) headed by colonel general Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. Although El-Sisi was appointed by Morsi, he overthrew and imprisoned him in a military coup on July 3, 2013 (Shavit, 2015). In addition, this military coup against the first democratically elected president in the history of Egypt was strongly supported by the U.S. administration (Burchill, 2015).

The SCAF continues to receive a tremendous deal of support from the successive and current U.S. government. For these reasons, many believe that the U.S. has thwarted the Egyptian revolution by supporting the military cause instead (Stein, 2012). In this connection, the views of some intellectuals in the Western world who perceive political Islam as an anti-liberty and anti-democracy movement (Schirrmacher, 2016), align with various media perceptions which misrepresent Islam in general through stereotyping Muslims based on their faith,
without any intention of comprehending their religious visions. These influential resources accuse Muslims repeatedly of violence, acts of terrorism, extremism, inflexibility, ignorance and threatening the national security (Altwaiji, 2014; Brown, Brown & Richards, 2015). Interestingly, Jawad (2015) stresses that the MENA region is labelled by *exceptionalism*, and that is for being deprived in terms of integrating and making progress in world economy as well as for being the actual home for political Islam. In this context, it can be stated that there is a clear contradictory equation of wealth, poverty and intentional socio-political and religious failure occurring in MENA region, and linking this equation to the ideology of political Islam tends to worsen the situation of uncertainty.

Additionally, this ambiguous equation is alarming particularly when considering the abundance of natural resources and large petroleum fields in the MENA region, and examining the historical progress and accomplishment made by Islamic leaderships in other parts of the world, including Al-Andalus.

Considering the historical development that had been made in Al-Andalus by the Arab Muslims as well as the current abundance of natural resources in the MENA region, it can be argued that there is a sense of concern that exists among Western governments towards the socio-political and religious improvement that can be achieved by emergence of political Islamic parties. Moreover, Western governments are not concerned that democracy or political Islam would lead to socio-political and religious improvement, but that it may lead to populist governments that would threaten the U.S. and other Western powers access to oil, shipping lanes and the security of Israel. Turkey (although not Arab) is a potential...
example here. In this context, the sense of concern could potentially resuscitate the success of Arab Muslims in Al-Andalus; hence, expose the Western interests in the MENA region to danger.

Undoubtedly, the Western world prides itself on being democratic and accepting. However, its ambiguous responses to political Arab reforms and lack of transparent support for elected political Islamic parties in Egypt and Tunisia can be seen as contradictory to the basic foundations of democratic values. In other words, these parties were in fact democratically elected, according to the principles of Western liberal democracy, and should have been given democratic opportunities as they had proclaimed commitment to democratic values and adherence to diversity (Gerges, 2013). In this regard, considering the Western responses along with the coverage of international news agencies towards the Arab Spring and the demands of people, McMillan (2016) stresses that the Western responses lacked objectivity and rationality and were purely focused on a materialistic agenda that sought to maintain the wide range of Western interests in the region. Therefore, it has been argued that such unwillingness to accept democracy in its Islamic configurations by the Western side (Wilson, 2014), and particularly by the U.S., raises many apprehensions. In addition, this affirms that there is a serious gap of socio-political misunderstanding by Western authorities, and a confusion towards the Arab Muslims perspective and voice (Makdisi, 2014).

In one way or another, these gaps of misunderstanding and mistrust in Arab-West international relations based on the decisiveness of Arab Muslims, may be the core reason that deteriorates such important relations. As a result, the EU
reactions to regional demands have been described as feeble and defective in spite of the little crisis management diplomacy reforms that have been made (Juncos & Whitman, 2015). Therefore, both Arab Muslims, including their political leaders, as well as Western diplomats and politicians share a challenging responsibility to reach out to each other and facilitate pathways for well-constructed foreign policies that comprehend and rectify political differences prior to implementing actions. Additionally, it is crucial to ensure the accessibility of a pragmatic diplomatic training scheme for Western diplomats and politicians, which takes into consideration the existing educational, cultural and religious gaps and works on addressing them constructively.

Habermas’s methods of critical reflection and analysis, rationality, effective communication along with the use of cross-cultural engagement strategies are an opportunity to radically improve future Arab-West international relations. The theory of communicative action in particular can facilitate contemporary socio-political strategies to re-evaluate the future of Arab-West international relations based on rational thinking, critical reflection, effective engagement and mutual understanding. These contemporary socio-political strategies will enable both Arab Muslims and Western diplomats and politicians to possess forms of self-criticism and rational reflection, and potentially create a better understanding and effective outcomes (Freundlieb, et al., 2004).

The following section endeavours to shed light on religious based knowledge and proven historical Islamic thought on international relations. Furthermore, a special attention in the following section will be paid towards the
Arab-Islamic civilisation of Al-Andalus and the impact of Islamic agency on international relations, whilst implementing various Habermasian epistemological insights as well as self-reflective analysis against the relevant socio-political events and the literature directed to interpreting them.

3.5 Religious Based Knowledge and Proven Historical Islamic Thought on International Relations

Islamic thought along with the Arabic language, the language of the Holy Qur’an, have influenced and contributed to various civilisations and their international relations throughout history. Trusting in the divine teachings of Islam, the Arab Muslims took the initiative and began to implement these teachings across the Arabian Peninsula and other parts of the world, including the Arab-Islamic civilisation of Al-Andalus. Once the Arab Muslims had reached Europe, in particular, Spain and Portugal, understanding the Islamic thought and the Arabic language grew in significance among Westerners in order to maintain a realistic understanding of the motives behind the enthusiasm and dedication of Arab Muslims, and their successful approaches towards rationality and tolerant society.

The willingness shown by Europeans during that era to grasp foreign cultural inspirations and religious variations reflects the distinctive work of Habermas’s critical theory, that is, the significant outcomes of having diverse schools of thought collaborating together, and developing various forms of strengthened strategies of exploration and transformation of knowledge (Held, 1980). In the historical context, as the Arab-Islamic civilisation of Al-Andalus
began its expansion across Spain, the translation of Arabic texts and scientific materials commenced in the 10th century and remained active until the present time (Daiber, 2012). As a result, it can be stated that the historical initiatives of Arab Muslims along with Islamic organisations have contributed significantly to various forms of contemporary understanding of socio-political affairs, including interreligious and inter-civilisational dialogues across the globe (Esposito, 2011). Additionally, modern Islamic discourse has evolved throughout time to include interreligious dialogues and other socio-political affairs. In this context, the significance of the widely recognised educational platform among Muslims and Christians known as “A Common Word Between Us and You” (pp. 90-91), that was proposed by Muslims to their fellow Christians in order to enlighten the followers of both faiths about the religious similarities and potentially eliminate misconceptions about Islam and Christianity as well. In this connection, it is fruitful to indicate the correlation between contemporary Islamic perceptions towards exchanging knowledge and extending the circle of exploration, and the Habermasian way of interpreting knowledge grasping, in which Habermas’s critical theory endorses the centralised role of critique and rational thinking in enhancing mutual communication (Freundlieb, et al., 2004).

The implication of a Habermasian way of knowing and cooperating is creating platforms of self-criticism and rational reflection; hence, strengthening communication and learning platforms. Furthermore, these tolerant and constructive platforms are greatly needed in today’s socio-political and religious atmosphere, especially when Arab Muslims and Westerners are concerned.
Notably, these platforms of understanding need to be placed in the spotlight and spread accordingly via mainstream Western media in order to enhance the way people perceive each other’s socio-political and religious affairs, instead of spreading counterproductive and dividing materials that extend the gap between the two cultures and belief systems. However, Esposito (2011) believes that the poor media coverage that was dedicated towards the constructive Islamic-Christian initiative indicates a lack of eagerness to spread good news via mainstream Western media. In comparison, it can be argued that the modern-day approaches utilised by Western counterparts tend to utilise different variations to those used by Europeans during the Arab-Islamic civilisation of Al-Andalus.

To exemplify the dedication that contemporary Muslims have towards interfaith dialogues and understanding, 138 Muslim intellectuals filed a constructive letter regarding the love of God and love of neighbour to their fellow Christians leaders, titled *A Common Word Between Us and You*. The following is part of the letter:

Muslims and Christians together make up well over half of the world’s population. Without peace and justice between these two religious communities, there can be no meaningful peace in the world. The future of the world depends on peace between Muslims and Christians. The basis for this peace and understanding already exists. It is part of the very foundational principles of both faiths: love of the One God, and love of the neighbour. These principles are found over and over again in the sacred texts of Islam and Christianity. The Unity of God, the necessity of
love for Him, and the necessity of love of the neighbour is thus the common ground between Islam and Christianity. The following are only a few examples:

Of God’s Unity, God says in the Holy Qur’an: Say: **He is God, the One! / God, the Self-Sufficient Besought of all! (Al-Ikhlas, 112:1-2)**. Of the necessity of love for God, God says in the Holy Qur’an: **So invoke the Name of thy Lord and devote thyself to Him with a complete devotion (Al-Muzzammil, 73:8)**. Of the necessity of love for the neighbour, the Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said: “**None of you has faith until you love for your neighbour what you love for yourself.**”

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ (**عليه السلام**) said: ‘**Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. / And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. / And the second, like it, is this: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.**” (Mark 12:29-31).

In the Holy Qur’an, God Most High enjoins Muslims to issue the following call to Christians (and Jews—**the People of the Scripture**):

Say: **O People of the Scripture! Come to a common word between us and you: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside God. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him). (Aal ‘Imran 3:64)**
The words: we shall ascribe no partner unto Him relate to the Unity of God, and the words: worship none but God, relate to being totally devoted to God. Hence they all relate to the First and Greatest Commandment.

According to one of the oldest and most authoritative commentaries on the Holy Qur’an the words: *that none of us shall take others for lords beside God*, mean ‘that none of us should obey the other in disobedience to what God has commanded’. This relates to the Second Commandment because justice and freedom of religion are a crucial part of love of the neighbour.

Thus in obedience to the Holy Qur’an, we as Muslims invite Christians to come together with us on the basis of what is common to us, which is also what is most essential to our faith and practice: *the Two Commandments of love*. (A Common Word, 2007, emphasis in the original).

Undoubtedly, the pluralist society in which we live is changing and developing swiftly, placing further responsibilities of effective and rational cooperation on the two largest major religions on earth, Christianity and Islam, and opening future scopes for a better understanding of the current socio-political and religious dilemmas across the globe. These combined responsibilities and efforts are essential for Muslims and Christians to direct their objectives towards making the world a better place, and uniting people based on the love of the one God, and love of the neighbour. Additionally, these responsibilities foster people to possess forms of Habermasian self-criticism and rational reflection; hence, enhance the transformation of knowledge grasping and critical understanding. In other words, there is a clear necessity to address the contemporary socio-political and religious
affairs from a religious based knowledge and proven historical Islamic thought. That is where the significant role of Habermas’s critical theory and his theory of communicative action can be influential. In this connection, both theories advocate for the contemplation of freedom and rationale of any society in ways that guarantee the preservation of requirement of all society members, particularly when mutual communication is concerned (Joll, 2010; Schaefer, et al., 2013).

Likewise, MacKendrick (2008) believes that Habermas’s critical theory urges persistent analysis of expressive and educational affairs from social theoretical perspectives, where cognitive visionaries are upheld in order to reflect the religious contributions that can be made to society and culture.

In the context of Arab-West diplomacy and international relations, it can be stated that the mission of enlightening Western diplomats and politicians about political Islam cannot be accomplished without an effective introduction of the teaching of Islamic morality in various Western educational platforms, including moral educational curriculum and mainstream media. This provides rational researchers, students, diplomats and politicians with constructive opportunities to enhance their records of effective knowledge related to the indispensable and historical development of moral thought and action. Such would have potential to pinpoint the blindspots and various biases in Western settings that invariably sit at the heart of the intransigent disputes noted herein. Furthermore, they would have potential to challenge the ways that extremist Muslims perceive the teachings of Islam and influence the minds of others of all cultural and religious backgrounds. Finally, they would provide for the kinds of strong and mutual dialogues that
safeguard moral education in general (Lovat, 2016). For these reasons, education sectors in the Western world are strongly encouraged to facilitate effective interactions with Arab Muslims and provide seekers with educational strategies that ensure receiving the best possible educational materials and guidance about the Islamic tradition from valid and reputable resources (Lovat, 2016).

In this context, educational strategies, when integrated into a concept of historical hermeneutic, as illustrated by Habermas, can effectively guide negotiators and political representatives to acquire rational knowledge and extend the learning platform of pragmatic understanding. This can be accomplished as a result of constructive engagement and direct dealings between representatives in ways that avoid the exclusive reliance on the inter-subjective experiences of those who are influenced by various socio-political affairs (Lovat, 2004). Moreover, Lovat (2016) emphasises the significant role of moral educators in which they are stimulated to concentrate on the real Islamic moral traditions, and identify the misconceptions surrounding the reputation of Islam as well. In this connection, it can be said that Islam offers various moral, intellectual and effective characteristics that deserve to be observed and well-recognised by Muslims and non-Muslims as well.

These characteristics include the authentic Islamic comprehension of intercultural and interreligious affairs, supporting contemporary knowledge and scientific innovations, and implementing modern gender equity conceptions (Lovat, 2013b). Additionally, the deterioration of Arab-West international relations consists of two major issues; one lies within the lack of Western
inclination to comprehend the constructive interpretations that exist within Islamic thought on international relations, and second is the failure and political degradation of contemporary dialogues proposed by political Islamic parties. Indeed, these are ambiguous and problematic barriers that have to be overcome, particularly by the Arab Muslims who need to demonstrate practical leadership skills. This may be of importance for Arab Muslims, in order to prepare high profile Islamic-political leaderships and establish well-planned political institutions that can constitute political policies, deliver results, engage Westerners and persuade foreign policymakers of its contemporary objectives (AbuSulayman, 1991/1993). In this context, integrating Islamic-based knowledge of socio-political interactions and arrangements in modern-day international relations is necessary.

This integration can be strengthened by various Habermasian interpretations, including the rejuvenation of critique and rational thinking, and the introduction of necessary podiums for compelling effective communication, rationale and self-criticism. However, the proposed integration struggles with a number of roadblocks, such as the ability to engage directly in dialogues when discussing current affairs from contemporary Islamic ontological perspectives, with Western agencies that tend to rely on philosophical grounds (Alruwaih, 2014). These roadblocks tend to limit the reproduction and implementation of knowledge gained through faith into practice from Islamic viewpoints. Additionally, it may strain the ability of an Islamic-based knowledge seeker to plant ontological seeds into the grounds of international relations, in order to eliminate barriers inhibiting the process of growing. According to Habermas’s
notions on constructive discussions, integrating religious and socio-political dialogues and conducting mutual dialogues need to begin by reinforcing the ideological criticism and self-determining politics away from authoritarian censorship (Held, 1980). This can be fruitful if not necessary, especially when pondering the current religious correlations between the Christian and Muslim nations, and how to accordingly develop these correlations for the benefit of all societies. In this connection, Brennan (2003) stresses that the greatest religious challenge in social life lies within the relationship between Christianity and Islam.

This challenge suggests that social relations, acquisition of religious knowledge, peaceful coexistence, constructive political dialogues and the understanding of one another to appreciate differences, need to start on an ontological level. This view is supported by Lovat (2007), who argues that there is indeed room for improved Islamic-West relations that can be achieved by fortifying mutual dialogues through historical and traditional Islamic customs. This is an important step forward towards a capable society that utilises common similarities that bring different schools of thoughts together rather than disuniting them. From a philosophical standpoint, Habermas’s theory of communicative action can facilitate platforms for enhanced Arab-West relations through invigorating its context with mutual historical Islamic traditions towards the Western world. This can be achieved by associating Islamic notions of international relations with a modern form of rationality along with the assimilation of lived experiences; hence, redirecting the concept of enlightenment through the formation of critical theory of modernity. By the same token,
Habermas (1981/1984) stresses that the intended critical theory of modernity must contain theoretical constructions along with historical reconstructions of the notions of classical social theorists. Other studies have also considered the association between the pluralist society in which we live, and Islam, in order to strengthen the positive significance of both combined. For example, Talbi (1995) stresses that people’s differences should be the essence of human interaction and engagement that drives isolation away from socialisation. In this connection, Talbi’s argument may have been derived from the Qur’anic verse that says: “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other.” (Quran 49:13).

Since the Holy Qur’an is considered to be the true words of God, at least to its Muslim followers, then such a verse sends out a well-knit message of engagement and respect to all mankind regardless of their religious or cultural backgrounds. It also breaks all communication barriers, instead encouraging dialogues and resolving misinterpretations. Interestingly, Western interpretations of effective engagement and mutual discourses presented by Habermas find common grounds of understanding and ramifications in the Islamic context presented by various verses of the Holy Qur’an. According to Joll (2010), Habermas’s critical theory introduces a ground-breaking source of knowledge that aims at maintaining the rationale of individuals and assisting them to unconditionally express their socio-political and religious views.

In this context, Habermas’s elucidation in his critical theory can play a mediating role in reducing the existing socio-political and religious
misinterpretations between Arab Muslims and Westerners through the facilitation of mutual platforms of effective interaction and critical reflection in future Western diplomatic training programs. Furthermore, if such a verse and many similar other verses are interpreted according to their productive meanings, wider scopes of cooperation among different schools of thought will be facilitated worldwide, and perhaps implemented towards inter-faith dialogues that adhere to diversity and respect through Islamic traditions (Talbi, 1995). It may be clear by now that this dissertation argues that such an approach provides constructive opportunities that can assist in re-establishing a political atmosphere where in-depth knowledge is adopted and positive outcomes are reproduced effectively based on human engagement and interaction for social cohesion in a pluriform world.

Islam as a religion and way of life is not exclusive to Muslims only, but rather it is a religion that came as mercy to all mankind to ensure that the world we live in is brimming with peace, fortune and well-being (Islam, 2013). Additionally, the teachings and ramifications of the Islamic faith possess great potential to revamp societies (Lovat, 2007). This is explicitly demonstrated through various verses of the Holy Qur’an. For example, Allah (SWT) says: “And we have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds” (Quran 21:107). This verse shows comprehensiveness in sending a global call of mercy to all mankind, and is strongly supported by the well-known British author and commentator, Karen Armstrong who has written widely on comparative religions and ultimately rose to prominence with her book A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Armstrong (2000) emphasises that Prophet Muhammad
(peace be upon him) did not seek to establish a new religion on earth, but rather aimed at reintroducing a religion that includes the other Abrahamic religions, Christianity, and Judaism in its teaching for the sake of promoting the oneness of God. Such a view tends to give a constructive analysis that revives historical relations and similarities between followers of Abrahamic religions, and encourages them to look back at their traditional religious customs (Lovat, 2007).

3.5.1 The Arab-Islamic Civilisation of Al-Andalus and the Impact of Islamic Agency on International Relations

As Islam grows in followers, despite the current socio-political worldview, it continues to provide an in-depth knowledge of worldly life, supported by a spiritual belief system that enhances the rewarding religious based knowledge through theories and practices. This can be seen when the Arab-Islamic civilisation of Al-Andalus fast tracked other nations in aspects of social welfare, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, physics, alchemy and chemistry, cosmology, ophthalmology, geography and cartography, sociology, innovations and psychology (Levi, 2012). The influential Arab Islamic leadership in Al-Andalus reinforced the necessity for utilising advanced technological and architectural tools as well as cultural development to effectively serve the people and increase their productivity (Kennedy, 1996). Additionally, the effective philosophical understanding of Arab Muslim leaders towards the diverse and successful societies of Al-Andalus was derived from Muhammad Al-Tabari’s work (839–923 CE), that presented Islam and its close association with the three Abrahamic heritage (Lovat, 2013b). Interestingly, that Islamic advancement took place in a time where other
civilisations were struggling with socio-economic obstacles and other educational challenges. In the same connection, the Western world entered their Enlightenment period around a thousand years post the advanced Islamic period (Lovat, 2007).

Authors such as Yahya (2002) demonstrate the comparative similarities in acquired knowledge between the West and the Muslim civilisation that preceded it in Al-Andalus. Yahya’s argument, that a large part of Western knowledge was gained from Muslim civilisation, is strongly supported by Levi, (2012) who believes that the Islamic religion is privileged in both spiritual and worldly knowledge. In that sense, it provided the Europeans with driving forces that lifted them gradually from haziness and mystery into enlightenment and prosperity. Moreover, during the process of forming the story of the foundations of Islam, Muhammad Al-Tabari (1989) indicated the constructive exertion that was implemented by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) towards the Christian and Jewish communities of Arabia. Al-Tabari illustrated that the Prophet’s exertions towards mutual cooperation were unsuccessful and that was due to the unwillingness of Christian and Jews to cooperate with Muslims during that time.

The constructive efforts of the Prophet and the later illustrations of Al-Tabari were effectively adopted by Caliphs in various parts of Al-Andalus, including Cordoba in the 8th and 9th centuries, in which Muslim leaders ensured interreligious tolerance and fair treatment towards Christians and Jews, and that approach helped Muslims in gaining further respect and good reputation accordingly (Lovat, 2016). Safran (2013) also emphasises that the Muslims of Al-Andalus affirmed their leadership based on Islamic socio-political authorities, and
that ensured the socio-political responsibility of Muslim leaders towards the wellbeing of the non-Muslims living under their authority. In this connection, Habermas’s theory would enhance such political Islamic approaches quite effectively as these approaches tend to align with his primary purpose where he worked determinedly on remodeling the historical materialism to highlight the issues of the contemporary world and also the shift in the Western political society and economy (Murphy & Fleming, 2010). That is why the application of critical theory in contemporary Western diplomatic training programs can be constructive. This is because it aims at explaining the socio-political determinants that describe the boundaries of analysis of particular philosophical views along with moving beyond the application of imagination.

By maintaining focus on these matters, critical theory results with two concepts of rationality. The first concept is related to the dominant form of power and the second one is more towards a liberating force. In this connection, Habermas focuses on these two types of rationality in his critical theory and states that the first form is used as a means-ends way of understanding human and environmental relations while the second form is focused on utilising human action in criteria of action validity (Bubner, 1982). The latter concept of rationality aligns with Kant’s principle of morality in which Kant asserts the significance of human beings. In this context, Kant proposes the idea that humans are an end in themselves and therefore should not be thought of as tools or means to attain something (Bubner, 1982). For this reason, it can be stated that these concepts of rationality and comprehension were effectively implemented in the way Arab
Muslims led in Al-Andalus, and such application allowed them to rationally understand the demands of people and environmental relations along with the actions of people socio-political and religious matters.

Christian Europe, particularly during the Convivencia, was going through an intense period of discrimination and anti-Semitism, and was conducting massacres during the Crusades against Muslims, who in return fought efficiently to defend their longstanding controlled lands from the Christian invaders (Ashbridge, 2010). Advocates and enemies of building bridges of peace among Christians, Jews and Muslims utilised their own interpretations to exclusively preserve their vested interests (Lovat, 2016; Emon, 2012). By the same token, various academic materials have been published recently for the purpose of damaging any productive historical or modern-day interpretations of Al-Andalus with intentional reference to the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict and labelling the Islamic religion as a xenophobic and discriminatory religion, particularly towards Christians and Jews (Lovat, 2016). In this connection, it can be stated that such intentional negative interpretations of the Arab-Islamic civilisation of Al-Andalus aim at misguiding people and potentially diminishing their sympathies towards Arab Muslims and the Palestinian cause based on misinterpreted historical Islamic events.

These various academic materials contradict in nature the work of the highly regarded scholar of Islam, Bernard Lewis who stresses that the Arab Muslims were extensively open-minded; hence, they facilitated various respected platform for the Jewish communities to freely follow and apply their own religious traditions (Lewis, 1984). On the other hand, Lewis (1984) identifies various
scenarios of contradictions and stereotypes towards Muslims by non-Muslims based on the teaching of their religion. To give an example regarding the existence of these contradictions and stereotypes, Lewis (1984) states; “[t]o put the two stereotypes in Jewish terms, in one version classical Islam was like modern America, only better; in the other it was like Hitler's Germany, only worse, if such can be imagined” (p. 3). Conversely, Durant (1980) stresses:

At the time of the Umayyad caliphate, the people of the covenant, Christians, Zoroastrians, Jews, and Sabians, all enjoyed a degree of tolerance that we do not find even today in Christian countries. They were free to practice the rituals of their religion and their churches and temples were preserved. They enjoyed autonomy in that they were subject to the religious laws of the scholars and judges. (as cited in Lovat & Moghadam, 2018, p. 69)

Considering the contradictory views regarding the Arab Muslim in Al-Andalus, Menocal (2002) points out that Lewis and Durant present an example of non-Muslim scholars, specifically Jewish and Christian who have thoroughly studied and comprehended the history of Dhimmitude (a historical term that refers to non-Muslim citizens living under Islamic rule) in order to clarify the wide range of existing misconceptions. However, this does not necessarily mean that the treatment and tolerance of Arab Muslims in Al-Andalus towards non-Muslims were free from any type of faults or imperfections. Rather, it indicates that it was a civilisation that presented the world with constructive aspects of socio-political
and religious tolerance at a time when these progressive aspects did not exist more generally (Lovat, 2016).

Considering the open-mindedness and practicality of the Arab-Islamic civilisation of Al-Andalus, Lovat (2016) stresses that harmonious coexistence can be attributed to various Islamic socio-political and religious factors, including the unique convincing Islamic theology that rationally comprehends the morality of tolerance towards Christianity and Judaism. Additionally, Lovat (2016) praises the theology of Islam for being inclusive towards the religious status of both Christians and Jews, along with their highly respected religious figures, including Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mary. On the other hand, Lovat (2016) indicates that unlike Islamic theology, Judaism has no theological reference to Christianity or Islam, whilst Christianity has a limited and traditionally destructive theology towards Judaism, let alone its non-existent theology of the Islamic religion. If these constructive illustrations by various rational thinkers are integrated in a contemporary Western diplomatic training along with effective concepts of Habermas’s critical theory, including his theory of society that carries a practical intention, then the practical aim can be a self-emancipation of individuals from the society’s domination.

By evaluating the self-formative processes of humans, Habermas’s purpose is to enhance the understanding of the social groups that can change the society. This is of importance to Western diplomats and politicians, especially when it comes to understanding the demands of active non-state actors and political parties in the MENA region as Habermas’s perceptions aim at redefining irrational
concepts and helping in the utilisation of history through one’s own will and consciousness. To prove his point and to defend his concept of critical theory, Habermas has worked on coming up with a philosophical understanding. To do so, Habermas has recreated some of the thoughts of classical Greek and German philosophy such as the inseparability of virtue and authenticity, of facts and values and theory and practice. For Habermas, the idea behind critical approach originates from the subject of history.

In this connection, Habermas states that the history of the 20th century is distinguished by some of the most significant developments in both capitalist and socialist societies (Kellner, 1990). For this reason, it can be stated that political Islam and Islamic traditions possess the necessary conceptual infrastructure to understand contemporary thought and construct a tolerant and successful diverse society. In such a society, freedoms are considered indispensable, and adherents of all religions can enjoy the same socio-cultural, educational, commercial, political and religious rights to freely practice their beliefs without any forms of censorship and captivity. Additionally, political Islam refers to and considers Christians and Jews as People of the Book, or Dhimmis, to whom Holy Scriptures were revealed by Allah (SWT) (Karabell, 2007). Therefore, it can be stated that Islam and its teachings tend to provide pragmatic and tolerant educational opportunities to Christians and Jews, and these enlightening opportunities can be effectively utilised to strengthen the core value of mutual and rational understanding to make societies better places for coexistence, self-criticism and rational reflection.
In this context, it is crucial to deal with the misconception about Islam in the Western setting by introducing the tolerant work of a number of Muslim scholars, including the work of Tunisian historian and Qur’anic scholar, Mohamed Talbi who tends to present Islam and its teaching through inclusive tolerant approaches towards the entire world. For example, Talbi (1995) illustrates the tolerant character of Islam for knowledge seekers and educators by stating:

[W]e can think of the whole of humankind as a brotherly ‘community of communities’ or God’s Family as the Hadith states - in which everyone has the right to be different, to be accepted, and fully respected in their chosen differences. To respect others in their chosen and assumed differences - not just to tolerate them on point of pain - is finally to respect God’s Will. (p. 61)

In this connection, the Arab-Islamic civilisation of Al-Andalus provides contemporary knowledge seekers with examples on how the political teachings of Islam and the promotion of education among Muslims and non-Muslims alike were typical Islamic and leadership customs towards Muslims, Christians and Jews. Additionally, it has been stated that Muslims played a pivotal role in transforming the Western European civilisation by incorporating political stability, economic security, philosophical forms of Aristotle and other Islamic practices, including tolerance, social welfare, science, technology and philosophical practices (Lovat & Crotty, 2015).

In evaluating the remarkable achievements of the Arab-Islamic civilisation of Al-Andalus that spanned the 8th to the 15th century, it is then worth considering
the factors that made such a civilisation very successful, prosperous, and respectful towards ethno-cultural based relations and ultimate religious and social tolerance.

If it can be said that the authentic Islamic knowledge-based Muslim leaders in Al-Andalus who led that successful civilisation were just and tolerant towards other groups of faith, including promoting widespread knowledge and a constructive public sphere to all existing ethnicities, then it can be argued that the motivation for those leaders to do so was to be found in the endorsed Islamic thought of intercultural relations and the role of rationality in the public sphere. Hence, it is worth investigating the reasons of that success. For instance, the harmonious coexistence of Christians, Jews and Muslims in the medieval Iberian Peninsula has persisted to date as a special era of religious tolerance (Mata & Epalza, 2007), one that promoted peace, social justice and shared wealth of knowledge up until the Spanish Inquisition established by King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella I of Castile in 1478.

Scholars and philosophers from the three Abrahamic religions had prospered and engaged with each other to help advance the civilisation of Al-Andalus further through preparing scientific researchers (Levi, 2012). Furthermore, adherents of the Abrahamic religions during the era of Islamic leadership had communicated closely among each other and addressed socio-political and religious affairs, and endorsed the familiar aspects of Islam, Christianity and Judaism (Kamen, 2014). In addition, diversity and non-biased liberalism were key points for the success of communities in Al-Andalus, as people were able to apply their own laws and even extend their own military
associations regardless of religious differences (Kamen, 2014). In addition, Kamen 
(2014) went on to illustrate that the religious coexistence among Christians and 
Muslims included Muslim musicians taking a vital part in various Christian 
religious celebrations. Nevertheless, the remarkable period of prosperity in Al- 
Andalus and its successful platforms for effective public sphere were forced to 
come to an end, when the ruling royal Christian family in Spain targeted non-
Christians, utilised contradictory approaches away from rationality and self-
criticism; committed horrific genocides and war crimes and ended up expelling 
Jews and Muslims alike (Friedman, 2011). Moreover, the actions of this 
fundamentalist royal family were sufficient in terminating one of the most tolerant 
and advanced cultures the world has known since the 7th century.

It is important here to point out that even when Muslims were expelled by 
the ruling royal Christian family in Spain, their respect for diversity remained 
alive; hence, Jews and other religious minorities fled with them to North Africa 
and some parts of the MENA region. Therefore, small Jewish communities have 
been living in countries such as Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. On the 
other hand, Anderson (2002) stresses that the supporters of the Spanish Inquisition, 
including Felipe II were negatively contributing towards deteriorating the status of 
Spain, leaving behind them a country with huge financial deficits, a shrinking 
intellectual life, and little acceptable to the currents of thought. In this connection, 
it is disappointing to observe the dramatic changes in views that have happened 
following the collapse of the Arab-Islamic civilisation in Spain, and the current 
assumptions that refer to it. In this context, Calderwood (2014) expresses scenarios 

171
of contradictions between the prosperous Spanish tourism sectors that rely heavily on promoting the rich history of the Convivencia, and on the other hand, the Spaniards who remain doubtful about the Arab-Islamic civilisation that significantly contributed to contemporary Spanish history.

That significant and historical addendum implemented by the Arab-Islamic civilisation of Al-Andalus is hitherto inadmissible as an offshore beneficiation to the Spanish history (Mata & Epalza, 2007). Somehow, Spaniards seem to uphold destructive visions of Arabs in general and Muslims in particular. Moreover, numerous research studies have proven the Spanish ideology for admitting such visualisation. For example, a study was carried out by the Pew Research Centre (PRC) in 2008, revealed that 52% of non-Muslim Spaniards had negative views of Muslims. Consequently, this suspicious way of misinterpreting remarkable historical events to suit certain ethnic groups’ interest and traditions raises many concerns, not only in impacting future political international relations, social justice, development and cultural cooperation between Arab Muslims and Western politicians and diplomats, but also weakening the potential for future global unity. For these reasons, the dissertation has targeted, explored, identified, analysed and provided explanation for such misleading interpretations in order to potentially avoid repetitions of inaccurate commentary. The dissertation also attempted to provide constructive platforms for Arab-West relations based on proven historical and authentic Islamic international approaches that rely heavily on the concept of rationality, effective interaction and critical reflection. In this connection, it can be stated that the Arab-Islamic civilisation of Al-Andalus invested in many Islamic
ontologies and teachings to serve the communities of Al-Andalus in successful ways, creating atmospheres of mutual respect and understanding, and enhancing the socio-political and religious engagement among all inhabitants. These ways helped in constructing bridges between various schools of faith and strengthening the significance of intellectual thought; hence building a more understanding, educated and tolerant community towards others.

3.5.2 Political Islam and the Application of Habermas’s Descriptive, Interpretive and Critically Self-reflective Analysis

Historically, Islam and its politics have been known, at least to their proponents as a religion and way of life that emphasise the significance for people to be knowledge seekers and effectively link their educational efforts to being religiously faithful and constructive Muslims who can invariably contribute to society and culture. In this connection, authors such as Esposito and Shahin (2013) tend to provide a clear definition regarding the ideology of political Islam, that is, a call to involve the teachings and customs of Islam in various life matters, including socio-political and religious affairs, economics and civil and constitutional laws. However, the ideology of political Islam tends to create various forms of socio-political misunderstandings, especially when it is associated with the relatively new term, Islamism (Chamkhi, 2014). To clarify the misunderstandings surrounding the religion of Islam, Talbi (1995) emphasises that the Islamic way to truly understand and respect the will of God emanates primarily from the tolerant approaches that Islam contains in its teachings and promotions towards a greater understanding of people’s differences and perceptions of life.
These interpretations may least provide a clear indication of what the religion of Islam seeks in pragmatic terms and how its spiritual and worldly objectives align together to constructively create a stronger and distinguished society that understands its religious and educational responsibilities and engages effectively with other people, particularly non-Muslims. Conversely, Ayoob (2008) strongly affirms that the vast majority of Islamic works that have been conducted on the notion of interaction and association between politics and religion in Islam are country specific, condensed and difficult to navigate through for knowledge seekers who do not possess an extensive knowledge about Islam, its politics and adherents. By the same token, Ayoob (2008) went on to stress that studies in which forms of political Islamic activities are comparatively analysed and presented in comprehensible methods do not even exist.

On the other hand, Mandaville (2007) acknowledges the impact of Islamic politics in modern-day world affairs, ranging from multinational organisations seeking militant agenda in the name of Islam, to the transformation of political Islamic parties, to the misleading media representatives or analysts speaking on behalf of Islam and presenting their version of interpretations to the world. In this connection, political Islamic movements in the MENA region have been accused of taking benefits from the instability impacting the region to convey their political agenda (Schirrmacher, 2016). Similarly, political Islamic movements have been indicted for proposing democratic principles to win the hearts of people in order to potentially take control of administration and leadership (Khan, 2014). In this regard, the dissertation argues that the current approaches and political activities of
political Islam that are adopted by its supporters need to be revisited, updated and enhanced, especially when discussing political Islam with Western diplomats and politicians.

This may be of high significance in facilitating communicative educational platforms that enable the supporters of political Islam in the MENA region and Western representatives to effectively engage, discuss or even debate socio-political and religious matters according to contemporary interpretations. Additionally, these communicative and educational platforms need to adopt a rationalised communication along with an ontological strategy that can deepen our understanding of the various interpretation of such a religious and political ideology, and convey its core objectives to knowledge seekers. In this connection, the dissertation suggests that the application of Habermas’s concepts of critical theory and his theory of communicative action can provide what is needed to enhance the approaches of political Islam and clarify the existing misconceptions about it.

### 3.5.2.1 The Application of Habermas’s Descriptive, Interpretive and Critically Self-reflective Analysis

The value of Habermas’s notions is in constructing an authentic way of knowing that places the self-reflective knower as a rational knowledge seeker who associates their own life-world with the life-worlds of others (Lovat, 2013a). In this regard, political Islam needs to possess a pragmatic model for human affairs, religion, media, and the sciences that involve the interests and freedoms of every individual in society, and most importantly, convey these affairs to the Western
world in comprehensible methodologies. As a result, Habermas’s descriptive, interpretive and critically self-reflective intuitions can assist political Islam in ways that encourage its promoters to consider these interest, affairs and rights as technical, practical and emancipatory (Habermas, et al., 1974). These interests are seen to surface in different mediums such as work, international relations, interaction, and power which then give rise to the possibility of three sciences need for effective communication, rationality and self-criticism.

The three sciences that Habermas refers to are the empirical-analytic, the historical-hermeneutic and the critical science. In this connection, it is pivotal to indicate that a central claim to these three sciences is that they systematise and create the methods that are required for the achievement of human activity (Habermas, et al., 1974). Consequently, the potential human activity in political Islam, once developed according to the Habermasian empirical-analytic, the historical-hermeneutic and the critical science, can pragmatically lead to various forms of enlightenment, rationality, including critical reflection, communicative action, self-criticism, and the reduction of misapprehensions. Additionally, the potential Habermasian notion of human activity when applied on the ideology of political Islam, can be further enhanced by the introduction of Habermas’s concept of public sphere, that is, a private domain occupied by the members of a society, in which they come together forming a rational discussion and freely discuss socio-political and religious affairs.

According to Habermas, public opinion matters and therefore, should not be restricted when it comes to public discussions. Reflecting on this, Habermas
notes that the role of the press and media has shifted from sharing the public’s opinion and moved towards the promotion of consumer culture (Habermas, 1976/1991b). Considering the significance of the right public sphere, Habermas initiated his work by addressing the history of the public sphere and giving an account of the representative publicity that existed in the Middle Ages before the bourgeois public sphere rose to power (Habermas, 1962/1989). Furthermore, Habermas traces the difference between both private and public by looking at different fields such as language and philosophy.

In this context, Habermas elucidates that the representative publicity in historical terms consisted of lords and nobles in which the King represented power while everyone else was a spectator (Habermas, 1962/1989). Therefore, in the Middle Ages there was no division between the private and the public sphere as the power rested in the hands of a King. For the public sphere to evolve, economic developments were of utmost importance (Habermas, 1962/1989). For this reason, the role of capitalist methods in terms of production, trade and commodities that were part of the evolution process (Habermas, 1976/1991b). Furthermore, Habermas points out a significant attribute of the public sphere which is the use of rationality in critical debate. In this context, Habermas stresses that by allowing the public critical discussion to take place, the public sphere could keep a check on everything to make sure that power was not being used illegitimately (Habermas, 1962/1989). According to Habermas, the sphere that was to be used as a place for discussion between the society and the State was replaced by the bourgeoisie (Duelund, 2010). By the same token, the public sphere that was meant to show the
ruler’s power to the people was replaced by the state’s authority which was monitored by the people (Duelund, 2010). It the context of political Islam, it is worth noting, furthermore, that the application of a scrutinising and pragmatic public sphere can be decisive as it would determine the ways in which authority is distributed and legitimately utilised.

To study the emergence of the elite class, Habermas looked through different contexts such as the changes in the literary canon and the development in political journalism to the rising reading societies and the development of the coffee houses (Duelund, 2010). The public sphere, in this instance, encouraged rational debate within the sphere occupied by the bourgeois. In addition, Habermas highlights that during the eighteenth century, the rise in the political public sphere first took place in Britain (Duelund, 2010). As a result, the institutionalisation of the public sphere was carried out by the European bourgeois democratic states around the nineteenth century (Duelund, 2010). In this context, Habermas remarks that the public sphere’s institutionalisation was done to keep a check on the use of power. Thus, acquiring the status of a fully developed public sphere became wholly dependent on the social conditions that shifted over the passage of time (Duelund, 2010). However, the bourgeoisie took over the public sphere; hence, it was seen as a literary public sphere where people belonging to the elite class came together to discuss topics related to literature and art. As a result, the bourgeoisie had replaced the rights of the liberal public sphere by continually having the state interfere in the matters of the society (Duelund, 2010).
For these reasons, Habermas criticises the bourgeois for restricting people from entering the public sphere as a rule had been set that people with proper education and ownership of property could only enter (Duelund, 2010). With the emergence of the elite class, most of the bourgeois public sphere was closely linked to the aristocratic society. Therefore, the public sphere that included museums, theatres and concerts still showed links to the original bourgeois class (Duelund, 2010). Nevertheless, with the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere came the increase in the publications of literary texts written by the elite class and for the elite class. An example of such a literary book is Pamela that became the best seller of the century (Duelund, 2010). In this regard, the changes were not only seen in the field of literature, but architectural structures as well. By the same token, the popular architectural style had disappeared to the extent that newly built houses did not have separate dining and drawing rooms (Duelund, 2010).

It is valuable to note that with the passage of time, the bourgeois public sphere disintegrated due to economic and structural shifts. However, a significant aspect to be noted is that the public sphere was ruled by the social welfare democracies in which there was an ongoing competition between organisations that had conflict over interests and the public had been excluded from it (Habermas, 1976/1991b). Apart from these changes, an important shift was seen in the way people interacted with one another and the way the authors perceived their society and then projected it in their writings (Duelund, 2010). As a consequence, a close mutual relationship was observed between the privatised individuals who showed a keen interest in the human psyche and empathy (Duelund, 2010).
In addressing the approaches of political Islam, it can be stated that the desired integration of the Habermasian concept of public sphere needs to implement the actual role and definition of Habermas’s public sphere, that is, to freely express the interests of the civil society. According to Habermas, if one looks at the meaning of public sphere, it can be seen that public sphere was created for the public to come together and share their opinion. In this connection, Habermas considers the concept of the public opinion in light of the ideas presented by intellectuals like Hegel, Mill, Marx, Kant and Tocqueville (Keane, 1995). Hence, the term public sphere as it was a domain in which matters of privacy concerns that were affecting the members of a society were to be shared so that solutions could be discussed. That is the concept that can be effectively addressed, adopted and applied within political Islam, especially when dialogues about ideology are being discussed, debated, or even rejected. This will allow supporters of political Islam to further understand the concept of public sphere, integrate its concept into political Islamic perceptions and discuss its potential agenda. On the other hand, Western representatives can rationally agree, disagree or even debate various topics related to political Islam and suggest other comprehensible interpretations.

Historically, understanding political Islam and its promotion of democratic principles, social welfare, scientific and knowledge acquisition have been the subject of enormous discussion and stereotype, particularly among Westerners. Additionally, different forms of stereotypes about political Islam, negativity and judgment arise from various politicians, diplomats, policymakers, institutions and
others think tanks. This can be attributed to linking the advantageous teachings of Islam with other practices of extremism, violence, radicalisation and terrorism conveyed to the world by ignorant Muslims; hence, taken for granted by non-Muslims who may lack the education and willingness necessary to familiarise themselves with the tolerant and prosperous version of political Islam.

Emphatically, the correlation between Islam, spirituality, tolerance, knowledge, advancement and politics is widely documented in various verses of the Holy Qur’an. In these verses, Muslims are not just strongly urged to seek knowledge and effective interaction with others, but also required to implement what they learn from the knowledge sought in all of their dealings, including the cognitive interests that determine their knowledge and practices. However, existing practices of cognitive and human interests in political Islam tend to not define such interests and associate them with knowledge and human activity for the improvement of society. For these reasons, it can be seen that Habermas’s purpose behind formulating the theory of cognitive interests in *Knowledge and Human Interests* can be significant when applied to political Islam, as Habermas’s intuitions attempt to highlight the relationship between knowledge and human activity (Geuss, 1981).

Considering the significance of free speech and freedoms, Habermas asserts in his concept of critical theory that the very syntax of speech is maintained in anticipation of a form of life in which different concepts like freedom, truth, and justice can be attained. Importantly, Habermas’s critical theory makes use of this argument as its starting point. According to Habermas, critical theory is seeded in
a normative standard that is not erratic but is found in the structure of language and social action. Therefore, it can be stated that communication plays a crucial role in driving people towards effective social action and that is what is required from supporters of political Islam, particularly when discussing or debating its ideologies, agenda, or the socio-political and religious matters related to Arab Muslims in the MENA region. In this connection, Habermas believes that language is the medium that brings people together and forces them to participate in public spheres to share their concerns on essential subject matters (Habermas, et al., 1974). Hence, it is of significance for Western diplomats and politicians to understand the way Arab Muslims visualise, believe and perceive various socio-political and religious matters, including international relation.

It is important for Western diplomats and politicians to develop a better understanding of Islam and its role in encouraging Muslims to seek knowledge and effective engagement in spiritual and non-spiritual forms alike. Thus, it is worth nothing that Islam emphasises the significance of knowing God, and the methodology to achieve it through enhancing the worldly knowledge of humans in all aspects, including religions and science (Whittingham, 2007). This methodology has been documented in the Convivencia societies during the early stages of Islam there, in which forms of Islamic knowledge and effective interaction were constructively implemented. In addition, the unique methodology applied at that historical era has led to the application of scientific and philosophical practices on various educational, rational and innovative platforms, including agriculture, creative industries, engineering and medicine (Lovat, 2016).
In this regard, it is of equal significance to point out that there is a correlation between these historical Islamic approaches and Habermas’s critical theory, in which rationality is not just considered as a type of moralising criticism, but also as a kind of knowledge (Geuss, 1981). Therefore, the supporters of political Islam and its accurate objectives need to benefit from the facilitation of a pragmatic public sphere to indicate that the procedures of conveying their knowledge to Western diplomats and politicians are well-guided by principles of moral criticism, critical reflection and rationality in order to achieve non-biased elucidations.

To avoid any forms of prejudices, Habermas argues that there should be an ideal speech situation in which everyone is allowed to participate and present their views on different matters. By doing so, the integration of communicative action into political Islam, Western diplomacy and political systems may facilitate normative checks on various contexts, including Arab-West international relations. According to Habermas, rational criticism should be objected to its entailed conditions that cannot be avoided. On the other hand, Habermas supports criticism only if intellectuals accept the universal standards of validity along with an understanding of the opinions presented by others and a sense of agreement (Habermas, et al., 1974). In this regard, it can be understood that Habermas embraced the fundamental position of his predecessors, but he did not limit himself to the continued reflection and critique of ideology into which critical theory had diminished (Habermas, et al., 1974). Being clear about the role of philosophy, Habermas perceived it to smoothly fit into the part of interpreter and
critique. Furthermore, Habermas divided social action into groups of labor and interaction, thereby allotting cognitive and practical interests to both the groups.

In his approach towards redefining critical theory, Habermas calls for the rationality of people over everything else (Schaefer, et al., 2013). In this context, it can be stated that in order to benefit from the significance of demonstrating the concept of rationality as illustrated by Habermas, the literature that present political Islam as an effective tool of communication need to ontologically and pragmatically contain diverse forms of rationality, especially when addressing Western diplomacy or foreign policies. This can potentially lead to a more cohesive way of understanding the current socio-political and religious dilemmas, and explore its origins.

Arab Muslims tend to believe that the Islamic world has immensely contributed towards the initialisation of our contemporary world. This notion is supported by Lovat and Fleming (2014) who believe that in addition to the point where Islam is considered as the fastest growing religion in the world, both authors illustrate that Islam has positively contributed towards the scientific, cultural and civilisational developments of various Western nations, including the development of Australia. For instance, the world’s first three oldest universities were established in Muslim nations and are still operating. These include the University of Al-Karaouine in Morocco, founded in 859 by a woman named Fatima al-Fihri. Additionally, the second oldest university was the Al-Azhar University in Egypt, founded in 970-972, followed by the series of universities known as Nizamiyya, founded in the in 7th by Khwaja Nizam in in what is known today as the Islamic
Republic of Iran ("Muslim Universities Are," 2017). Certainly, it can be stated that the teachings of Islam have longstanding affiliations with the endorsement of education and science for men and women to help them develop into well-informed humans and capable rationally; hence, understand their spiritual role and seek worldly knowledge as well whilst assisting others. However, in modern terms, it can be stated that understanding the ideology behind political Islam from a Western perspective requires the facilitation of pragmatic public sphere that is developed through various Habermasian aspects.

These aspects include the concentration on participatory democracy and participation in the public sphere rather than following on the technical and philosophical experts to run countries. In this context, it is crucial for those in charge of presenting political Islam to adopt multiple Habermasian perspectives on public sphere where Habermas focuses on communication and reflective leadership in which people can come and discuss their matter freely, find clarifications and implement resolutions. Additionally, another significant point to consider is that while confronting the traditional concept of critical, Habermas asserts his thoughts on the matter and says that the public sphere can serve as an instrument to make things better. Moreover, Habermas believes in the questioning of the societal norms, to incorporate the theories in social life to improve the lives of others; both cultural and political and to question the rules the way the people of the Renaissance did.

Habermas also stresses upon using features from the critical theories and applying them in social life. He also strives for participation and public sphere
instead of the top-down regulatory approach in politics (Habermas, et al., 2013). Therefore, towards a pragmatic illustration of political Islam, supporters of such a political ideology need to implement various forms of Habermas’s critical theory that offer the members to conduct a reflection on the constructs of their society and the contributions towards knowledge (Held, 1980). Furthermore, critical theory promotes the members to consider the proposed claims for the concepts of neutrality and its ability to hide the role knowledge takes on towards creating an environment of social arrangements that are unsatisfactory. In this connection, it can be understood that the perceptual idea of critical theory exhibits an opposition towards the evident claims, directed at the social world (Held, 1980). These claims represent the idea that the prevalent structures show signs of being immutable. Furthermore, the theory looks into the possibilities of different views which offer the chances of groups or individuals are capable of aspiring for a high level towards their freedom and can truly attain it (Held, 1980). That different view can be hypothetically the way Arab Muslims perceive political Islam, and how the responsibility of Western diplomats and politicians lie within their abilities to aspire for a high-level knowledge grasping.

In exploring the concept of freedom, it can be stated that such a concept can lead political observers to believe that the inherent factors of social relations are possible to acquire. In support to the points viewed by Habermas, an important aspect is that critical theory can provide judgments based on social arrangements, and their ability in defining the limit to accept any form of open dialogue with others. This view analyses the factors that can break the unjustified exclusion for
political communities (Held, 1980). From an essential point of the theory, it envisages a model that abolishes the concept of object distinction and subjects, whereas applying emphasis on the available human needs and the sole purpose that determines the key elements that decide which knowledge is valuable and which is not (Held, 1980). Considering these rational aspects of critical theory, the ideology of political Islam can benefit from such Habermasian notions, and successfully apply them within knowledge seeking approaches to enable Western representatives with rational abilities to determine which sort of political Islamic knowledge can be adopted, debated or even repudiated.

The Habermasian approach can be useful in promoting elements that are able to identify three essential interest areas distinctively (Hoffman, 1989). These three interest areas are directed towards technical interest, emancipatory interest, and practical interest. By the same token, further analysis of each of these respective interests revealed that, professional interest is related towards the notion of establishing a base that conceptualises the power to extend control over elements such as society and nature, whilst emancipatory interest conveys the idea of locating and identifying social constraints and confinements and eradicating them over time (Held, 1980). Furthermore, practical interest promotes the notion for an individual to create an understanding based on the practice of establishing and maintaining communities. As a result, by implementing the concepts of critical theory onto these interests, it becomes understandable as to what role these interests play and their ability to contribute knowledge, provide a frame to
effectively evaluate the subject’s method of analysis and bring forth the difficulties of value-free knowledge.

When considering the previous important elements, Habermas’s critical theory adds further to the argument that society will remain to be incomplete if it is found to be lacking the fundamental purpose of emancipatory needs (Hoffman, 1989). Therefore, it can be stated that the ideology of political Islam needs to implement various emancipatory needs in its approaches, whilst acknowledging its fundamental purposes to construct a rational society that enjoys the variations in socio-political and religious perceptions.

Since many intellectuals across the globe believe that Habermas’s most influential contribution in the field of philosophy has been through the formulation of the rationality theory, it can be claimed that Habermas’s way of thinking can provide the political approaches of Islam conveyed to the Western world with various contemporary interpretations. These include the interpretation where human rationality is not merely by achieving one’s own goals, but to come up with a way to build a community that is devoted to using the communicative methods (Habermas, 1981/1984). In this context, Habermas believes in creating a community that lives in harmony and where people are open to public debate. This is the sort of community that the initiatives of political Islam can adopt, suggest and enhance in order to create a harmonious community for all individuals. In this context, by putting effort into making such a community, Habermas asserts that the members of a society will be exhibiting an excellent example of rational beings (Habermas, 1981/1984). Therefore, Habermas focuses on securing an ideal speech
scenario to let the masses speak up and voice their concerns to obtain some solution for the issues that can be solved through rational debate (Habermas, 1981/1984).

In the realm of communicative rationality, a theory which stresses upon human rationality as an essential outcome that has been achieved through the procedure of effective communication, Habermas asserts that humans are competent of gaining some speech that has undergone agreement (Habermas, 1981/1984). Additionally, Habermas also emphasises the fact that we as members of a society should work towards making a change in our surroundings by interacting with others openly and utilising our knowledge on different subjects instead of following the norms that the community has set out for the members (Habermas, 1981/1984). This Habermasian notion is particularly significant for promoters of political Islam as it would guide them towards deviating from the traditional notions and policies, and instead, encouraging them to expand their circle of knowledge associated with Western political perceptions, including the ability to rationally understand the ramifications of Western approaches towards their region.

In this context, Habermas admits that the formulation of communicative rationality has been a significant achievement (Habermas, 1981/1984). Furthermore, Habermas asserts that his theory of rationality differs from the viewpoints presented by other rationalists as Habermas believes that rationality can only be located when used in spoken communication (Dallmayr, 1988). As a result, it can be understood that Habermas’s theory can be constructive as it tends
to help in liberating humans from the constraints of the society that have been imposed on them through the implementation of different ideologies (Dallmayr, 1988). Additionally, it is also believed that aside from socially liberating people from the shackles of the society, the theory of rationality also presents an adequate framework based on ethical rules (Dallmayr, 1988). In this connection, it can be stated that the concept of liberation and morality can be combined to advance the existing interpretations of political Islam and make them further understood among non-Islamic societies. In addition to this, the social structure offered by the theory of rationality highlights the assertion that all forms of speech acts lead to an end which shows that the goal of shared understanding has been achieved (Dallmayr, 1988). In this connection, it should be pointed out that the theory of rationality has been formulated by using different theories such as the social theory and moral theory presented by influential philosophers such as Jean Piaget, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Karl-Otto Apel and many more (Dallmayr, 1988).

The combination of religion and politics is widely debated, and agreements or disagreement upon such a topic can easily occur. However, future Western diplomats and politicians must possess an effective awareness of the way non-Westerners perceive such a combination, particularly in the MENA region. For this reason, it seems that there are positive points that can be referred to from Habermas’s devotion towards rationality and mutual understanding, especially that he has been a devoted mentor to many and has taught at various institutes where he addressed various controversial topics. Over the years, there has been a never-ending debate based on the link between law and religion (Modak-Truran, 1997).
Additionally, intellectuals tend to be of the view that the world is not an integrated whole anymore, it has been divided by the differences based on metaphysical and religious viewpoints (Modak-Truran, 1997). Similarly, intellectuals believe that law stands as a meaningless institute as it cannot keep people together (Modak-Truran, 1997). In this regard, looking at the theories that have made a difference in the field of science subjects, it can be seen that Habermas’s theory of communicative action has contributed significantly in the field of law and politics (Modak-Truran, 1997). Likewise, Habermas claimed a form of democracy in which the constitution and laws are readily accessible to the public opinion.

In this connection, Habermas was of the view that by utilising this form of democracy, the member of a society will be made aware of their interests in self-governance (Modak-Truran, 1997). By doing so, people will take responsibility for their actions and cling to rational and logical debates. Additionally, by allowing rational discussions to take place in the public sphere, society will become more humane and will discard class-related issues. In this context, Habermas claims that in order for the law to be functional in the present times, it needs to have a post-metaphysical justification as the Western world continues to become disenchanted with the passage of time. In such a society, the capabilities of human beings will be accepted and will also be put to good use. Furthermore, Habermas argues that by eliminating the religious concepts and the notions regarding existence and life, the law can be implemented in a society (Modak-Truran, 1997). Thus, Habermas’s intuitions of self-governance, rational and logical debates along with rational
discussions can form the foundation of debates related the notions surrounding political Islam and its comprehension of a society as a whole.

In an article *Towards Reconstructing Historical Materialism*, Habermas voices his concerns regarding Marxist perspectives. He asserts that the Marxist analysis of human evolution has been limited to the economic development only and human liberty has been entirely left out. Furthermore, Habermas argues that the Marxist school of thought had seen the advancement of human communities as occurring in a linear form, while Habermas says that human progress cannot be confirmed to go in a linear pattern as humans can show dynamism. Therefore, the progress of human societies should be thought of as multi-dimensional and randomly occurring phenomenon. Similarly, Habermas focuses on communication in education and linguistics and does not believe that the expert has the right knowledge regarding the experiences of every individual. Therefore, the ideologies made by an expert cannot be applied to an entire society.

In this context, it can be stated that Habermas prefers bottom-up approaches by incorporating political and critical theories, and encouraging innovation and advancement of the community, regardless of what mechanism draws it. These Habermasian illustrations can serve as operational tools in the Western setting in order to better comprehend the perceptions of Arab Muslims towards political Islam, and how such comprehension can assist in developing rationality, critical reflection of historical Islamic concepts and self-criticism of current foreign policies. However, by disregarding the aspect of Arab Muslims social engagement through the ontology of Islam, and by implementing
international relations based on philosophical grounds, this may omit many important factors that Islam emphasises, essentially the role of human interaction in life and the implications of international relations (Alruwaih, 2014). In other words, integration from philosophical foundations of international relations to an ontological foundation that guarantees effective human interaction may contribute positively to more coherence of Arab-West international relations and allow it to advance further.

Such integration could involve a rational understanding of political Islam and be supported by Habermas’s works on the Anglo-American philosophers, including Ludwig Wittgenstein, and J. L. Auston among few others, where Habermas claims that human interaction was a crucial form of communicative approach rather than the strategic one (Jovchelovitch, 2001). In this context, Habermas’s theory of communicative action that considers forms of agreement rather than focusing on gaining self-interested goals of the individuals can be helpful towards future Arab-West international reasons. Additionally, in his theory of communicative action, Habermas discussed two thoughts, one that was based on communicative competence and communicative rationality and the second thought was based on distorted communication (Bolton, 2005). The first Habermasian thought of communicative competence and communicative rationality can be applied in future Western training programs in order to assess the social psychology of communication among future Western diplomats and politicians.

Habermas’s thought can also be utilised to pragmatically understand the perceptions of Western representatives, government bodies and delegations
towards the socio-political and religious state of affairs related to Arab Muslims in the MENA region. Furthermore, a moral-political approach that holds people accountable for their actions may enrich co-operation between nations, as this was a key point in historical Islamic forums and social engagements.

Historically, the Islamic way of understanding socio-political issues and the motivation to obtain political knowledge and authority, was quite successful due to adopting and advocating a global moral authority. This helped in advancing the Muslim nation substantially, and exceeding other nations in that period of time (Alruwaih, 2014). In this context, it can be stated that when socio-political researchers along Western diplomats and politicians deal with Arab Muslims affairs related to Islam or political Islam, an ontological understanding could potentially assist them in perceiving Islam and its socio-political affairs according to how the adherents of Islam perceive these affairs. In this connection, Muslims tend to perceive whatever came through the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as constructive, revolutionary and suitable to all phases of life; hence, Islam has played a pivotal role in redefining the place of Muslims on earth, and set new guidelines for Muslims to structure their own societies (McMillan, 2016).

Importantly, comprehending Islam from a Western standpoint as formative of reality according to the perceptions of its adherents is fruitful if not necessary. Alruwaih (2014) applies a number of socio-political aspects that could ultimately strengthen Arab-West international relations from ontological grounds. These socio-political aspects emanate primarily from various strategies, including addressing political Islam as constitutive of reality for Muslims, so dealing with
States as human entities guided by elements of moral accountability. Hence, governments operate to effectively assist representatives who understand ontological foundations of international relations to practice authority, and ultimately accommodate a friendly, ontological and regulative conceptualisation related to how the contemporary global society is structured as a framework of socialisation (Alruwaih, 2014). Considering these aspects, and by implementing them constructively, Alruwaih (2014) believes that the role of effective Islamic agency in international relations could develop into an evolving socio-political approach that could be productively utilised to address current socio-political and religious affairs, and bridge the existing gaps between different schools of thought (Alruwaih, 2014).

In contrast, other nations worldwide lacked inter-subjective strategies and did not construct a bridge that connected with the international Islamic society. Dokhan, (2008) argues that Arab-West international relations often lack principles of strategic clarity that combines in its folds military and political visualisation. In this connection, AbuSulayman (1991/1993) illustrates the lack of transparent principles of strategic clarity by the Western side that lies within turning the Islamic nations into a passive spectator in a show that involves only play-acting without tangible associations to reality. Although this does not necessarily mean that the fate of such international relations is built on the basis of permanent differences in policy making, nor can it be said that the changes occurring in these relations come from a sympathetic perspective or diplomatic contentment.

However, there have always been strategic and traditional interests from Western
governments, including oil, counterterrorism, the Iranian nuclear program, and the security of Israel (Makdisi, 2014).

Historically, the Western geo-strategic objectives in the MENA region date back to the Cold War era, when the West recognised the correlation between having strong economies and maintaining relations with Arab regimes, including the Gulf States. Many of these geo-strategic objectives were strongly taken into consideration in order to secure oil resources and safely guarding shipping routes from the Arab world to the West, in addition to protecting Western economies from potential Soviet incursions (McMillan, 2016). Furthermore, Western governments, including the U.S. and the U.K., realised that it was pivotal for them to protect their geo-strategic interests, including the highly operative oil companies in the MENA region, and the only way to accomplish this was via constructing various military bases in the region. The U.S. has always been concerned over the economic development of its trade allies; hence, it considers the MENA region as a key that constantly enhances that development and growth (Kaunert, Léonard, Berger & Johnson, 2014). For these reasons, the Western world has been using different approaches, ranging from international diplomacy via peace dialogues to military interventions, in order to maintain its presence in the MENA region. Western socio-political and defence policies towards Arab Muslims in the MENA region have, as a result, always had ambiguous agendas that ultimately aim at serving their own interests, without paying sufficient attention to the socio-political implications or reforms that could occur within Arab nations, and
potentially lead to educational crisis, military uprisings and the destabilisation of the region.

McMillan (2016) considers that the reality of Western leaders lies in seeking stability more than democracy in the MENA region, and they tend to do so in order to maintain their economic and geo-strategic interests, including the transport of oil, unconditional global trade and the security of Israel. Hence, McMillan (2016) argues that Western leaders have always been inclined to support Arab leaders or any political organisations in the MENA region that abide by their own commands and make commitments to protect ongoing Western interests in the MENA region. In other words, it can be stated that Western leaders admire the application of democracy in the Western setting but fear applying it in the Arab context due to a potential loss of authority and the potential emergence of uncertainty and destabilisation that could arise from accepting the democratic will of Arab Muslims. These latter could ultimately lead to a counter-force against Western interests in the MENA region (McMillan, 2016). However, with the application of Habermas’s descriptive, interpretive and critically self-reflective analyses, contemporary forms of understandings can be developed and implemented towards a better society and system, one with potential to unite different schools of thought and benefit from their similarities as well as differences. For this reason, Western diplomats and politicians learning Habermasian methodology and frameworks could subvert the pursuit of self-interest by States.
The following section endeavours to examine the ramifications of Western foreign policies and approaches on the MENA region and explores existing hindrances in inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial discussions. In addition, the following section will highlight the necessity for a diplomatic training program for Western diplomats and politicians, whilst applying various Habermasian epistemological insights as well as self-reflective analysis against the relevant socio-political events and the literature directed to interpreting them.

3.6 Western Foreign Policies and Ramifications on the MENA Region

Throughout history, U.S. and European foreign policies have standard approaches towards the MENA region and, despite their differences in policy making, both parties share common similarities of interests and strategic goals that predominately support their political demeanour (Altwaiji, 2014). Examples of this include preserving accessible routes to various natural resources of the MENA region, the protection of Israel and strengthening geo-political and strategic domination over the region. Additionally, Western foreign policies and influence towards the MENA region have had historical and contemporary longstanding affiliations with various socio-political dilemmas and Arab uprisings, including the Arab Revolt in 1916, when Sharif Hussein rebelled against the Ottomans, depending on British assurances to promote Arab independence and self-determination in the MENA region, including Palestine, and the Arab Spring in late 2010. In fact, Britain had a different agenda, being utterly determined to strengthen its geo-strategic presence in the region and weaken the Ottoman Empire. Hence, the Arab Revolt presented it with opportunities and convenience,
ones in which it could secure a number of military objectives in the MENA region, particularly when considering the outcome of the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans (McMillan, 2016).

Weatherby, Arceneaux, Leithner, Reed, Timms and Zhang (2017) argue that the unaccommodating Western foreign policies towards the MENA region and its alarming implications for the entire world have taken an increasingly dangerous direction. This is one in which the Western world has become a target of countless terrorist attacks, committed by various terrorist and extremist groups, including ISIL or even individually by lone wolves. Considering these dilemmas, Weatherby et al. (2017) offer an example of how U.S. foreign policies towards the MENA region are based on sweeping vested economic, political and geo-strategic interests. Led by these interests, they are impelled to do whatever it takes to preserve their access to the abundant resources of the region as well as ensuring the stabilisation of their allies and friendly nations in the region. In this connection, Western foreign policies towards the MENA regions are indirectly inclined to maintain despotic ruling regimes in the region, as long as these regimes preserve Western vested interests. On the other hand, it can be argued that the lack of pragmatic and genuine support by certain Western governments, including those of the U.S. and the U.K., of Arab socio-political initiatives has fostered in many Arab Muslims a perception of Western approaches as provocative and intransigent; hence, the result is a reduction of confidence among Arab Muslims in the MENA region in Western initiatives.
In this connection, such perceptions could enforce a counterproductive impact on the objectives of improving the future Arab-West international relations, especially when assessing various Western responses during the events that occurred in the Arab Spring, following which there were many apprehensions in Syria, including the Sunni-Shia competition, expectations were confounded, and placed further complications within the MENA region. Thus, a number of contradictions that have been found in the British policies remain to date, especially when considering the outcomes of the Arab Spring; hence, the UK government and its foreign policies can be described as uninformed. For example, the reeling understanding of the UK government towards the Syrian crisis, when at times, the UK employed numerous unsuccessful socio-political objectives in their policies which could not move in the expected direction. However, this does not necessarily mean that the UK government has not tried to deal with the crisis, but rather to indicate that the political complexity and transitions were overwhelming to be asserted in the right direction, and demanded pragmatic resolutions. Consequently, it can be understood among Arab Muslims that various Western approaches have contributed towards the emergence of terrorist groups and radical ideologies in the region, worsened the poverty situation, decreased the lack of economic and educational advantages and further aggravated the already catastrophic socio-political and religious state of affairs. This may reveal a key reason why Arab Muslims are generally disappointed by some Western governments (Dokhan, 2008).
3.6.1 The Frustration of Arabs towards Uncertain Western Political Approaches

It is important to figure out how frustrations from the Arab Muslim side are being dealt with from a Western perspective. For example, the Egyptian crisis following the Arab Spring increased the predicament of UK policies, especially when Arabs witnessed on various platforms, including social media and mainstream media that the UK was reconciling with the authoritarian regime of El-Sisi (Marcus, 2015). As a result of such a reconciliation, the Arabs in general, and Egyptian people in particular believed that the UK foreign policies and approaches towards Egypt are prejudiced, counterproductive, and support tyranny. This can be attributed to the role played by British journalism, including the elucidations of Marcus (2015); especially in welcoming El-Sisi to England and polishing him as a saviour of future Arab-British international relations, whilst distorting the image of the MB, along Mohamed Morsi, the first democratically elected president in history of Egypt. This fundamentally meant to the Arabs that Britain has accepted the seizure of power by the dictator and military man, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, over the democratically elected president, Morsi, and most importantly, dismissing the will of Egyptian people who elected him. Additionally, Abdullah (2017) stresses that El-Sisi is a well-known tyrant to the Arabs, who enjoys imposing repressive actions against all political opponents, including the MB members, and tries to continuously clamp down on media.

El-Sisi’s national and international policies remain evidently unsuccessful to give at least economic and security to his people, but he persistently practices
different forms of subjugation to hide away his failure and lack of leadership skills (Dorsey, 2017). This can be seen through the devastating economic deficit and the decreasing subsidies on electricity bills and fuels with some fragile steps of reform that are not working on the ground (Heistein & Buskila, 2017). It is for these reasons that Arab Muslims hold negative perceptions towards various Western governments, including the UK, especially when it comes to their ambiguous involvement in the socio-political affairs. Subsequently, the MENA region remains surrounded by many challenges, including economic, social, political instability, lack of education and lack of security, let alone the loss of dignity and wellbeing to many people. Indeed, the MENA region is facing the doom on a daily basis, the economic situation is deteriorating, unemployment among youth is increasing, and the tourism sector is also dropping down due to lack of security and the ongoing terrorist attacks against holy places and touristic attractions across the region, including Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Tunisia and Yemen. In this context, it can be argued that the only hope for Arab nations in the region to regain some positive aspects and improve the relapsing economic situation is through taking full control in operating revenues generated from the export of gas to other parts of the world. However, this hope is obstructed by roadblocks, including through meddling by Western superpowers, such as the U.K. and U.S.

U.K. foreign policies towards the Syrian crisis have gone through an array of debates and the U.K.’s military and political role added to the dilemma, especially after the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011, and the political role of dictator, Bashar Al-Assad. Indeed, the array of British policies and confusion is
a sheer reflection of the troubles in policies towards the future of Bashar Al-Assad, who committed war crimes against his own people (Ahmad, 2016). Initially, the British authority aimed at replacing Assad, However, with the current foreign policies employed and current means used, this mission can be described as unachievable; hence the U.K. has changed its position on Assad, and signalled that he can stay as a president (Wintour, 2017). In pragmatic terms, Syria deserves a reasonable and rational resolution from the international community to end the suffering of its people, but despite the recent military escalation and accusations of conducting chemical attacks on civilians, Assad has remained in power. As a result, more than 86 civilians died due to that horrific chemical attack that struck the rebel-controlled region of Khan Sheikhoun in north-west of Syria, causing serious debilities and symptoms of other illnesses to hundreds of people (“Syria chemical 'attack'”, 2017). In response to that horrific attack, the U.S. launched missile attacks targeting the Assad’s airfields within the next two days (“Syria: Donald Trump orders missile strike,” 2017). In this connection, the U.S. airstrikes were welcomed and received a wide range of support from various nations worldwide, including Australia (Armstrong, 2017), but the Syrian regime along with the Russian allies claimed that the chemical attack was made-up. (“Syria chemical 'attack’,” 2017).

Considering the deteriorating conditions in Syria, the question that needs to be raised is whether or not the U.S., the U.K. and the Russian administrations are genuinely willing to help facilitate the removal of Assad from leading the already torn country, Syria. As a result, it has been claimed that British approaches to
resolve the Syrian crisis have been unproductive; hence, Britain needs to strengthen its efforts and urge the U.N. to aid the country to prosper, create safe zones and achieve a genuine political solution (Benn, 2015). However, it can be stated that British policymakers have discontinued involving themselves in the realities of the Syrian crisis and reform generally in the MENA region. On the contrary, Britain’s diplomacy attempted to resolve the Syrian crisis by putting forward a suggestion to the U.N. Security Council, urging the five permanent members in it to facilitate platforms and conduct military operations against Assad to protect the Syrian civilians (“Syria crisis: UK puts forward UN proposal,” 2013).

Considering the U.K. political approaches, it can be stated that, to date, it has been scrambled with its reactions to the crisis in the MENA region, and wasted constructive opportunities to reconcile with Arab Muslims during the Arab Spring, particularly when it came to supporting the will of the people and their demand for political reform. For instance, British policies have sometimes sided with revolutionary movements, leaving Arab authorities in turmoil; on the other hand, it remained mute on brutal acts committed by despotic regimes in Bahrain, Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen (Leech-Ngo, 2015). As a result, it would seem that the U.K. has no genuine interest in making the key states in the MENA region stable in order to keep its control over the region, including the security of oil reserves and transport and the preservation of the arms industry and its sales.

According to Habermas’s notions, when individuals continue to maintain the practice of community-oriented misunderstandings, a questionable situation
may arise purely because these misunderstandings are considered as a norm to be followed. This would constrain the ability of individuals to seek the motivation required to authenticate such misunderstandings (Rienstra & Hook, 2006). This notion is worthy of reflection by the U.K. administration as Habermas (1986/1991a) presents a thorough and understandable approach towards certain issues regarding communication in his essay, *A Reply*. In his investigations, Habermas pinpoints the facts for communicative rationality being much more than a mere factor contributing to idealisation. Hence, Habermas presented communication rationality to be an entity, that is, accurate, giving concrete facts and being relative to understanding for society (Rienstra & Hook, 2006). In this context, it can be stated that U.K. foreign polices need to take into consideration the concept of communicative rationality for the visualisation of facts that are relevant to understanding societies.

### 3.6.2 Ramifications for the MENA Region

Another topic of tremendous concern for the people in the MENA region lies within the Western military interventions along with the ongoing arms sales to various despotic Arab regimes. In this regard, the U.K. government agreed to export 3.6 billion dollars arms to Saudi Arabia since the regional conflict of Yemen fired its first salvo; it was subsequently accused of welcoming tyrannic Arab regimes to the U.K. to finalise the deals (Roberts, 2017). The U.K. was also accused of selling cluster munitions, along with materials made for torturing people, which raises various questions about its strategic acuity and lack of compatibility with international obligations (Roberts, 2017). The activities and
events mentioned above should send a clear message to the Western world that it is crucial to engage with the Muslim world and develop accommodating foreign polices as well as a pragmatic diplomatic training program. Such a program should be mainly concerned with mutual communication and preservation of human lives and dignity, so rejecting the principles of materialism that seem to dominate at present.

Considering the potential consequences of ambiguous Western foreign policies, Kafaji (2011) illustrates that the increasing hostility towards the Western world from Arab masses is attributable to a number of alarming concerns of various Western scenarios in the MENA region, including their irrational approaches and military interventions. Moreover, Kafaji (2011) believes that frustration and pessimism have become customary for many Arab people, particularly when Western decision makers, political leaders and representatives are inclined to support autocratic regimes in the region, whilst priding themselves on being pragmatically democratic and accepting in the Western setting. In this connection, it can be argued that the Arabs perceive a large number of Western foreign policies and initiatives as prejudiced and contradictory, the antithesis of Western democratic principles and freedom of expression. Consequently, it can be stated that Arab Muslims and Western political and diplomatic relations need to develop international relations based on an effective communicative agent, mutual communication, effective dialogues, pragmatism and fairness in order to develop constructive and trustworthy rapports for all sides in dealing with compromising and disputed issues.
In this connection, pondering the analysis of Habermas’s theory of critical theory and theory of communicative action, it can be seen that Habermas has mentioned certain elements of idealisation in his theories and described these elements to be vital for a society to build and grow on (Luckin, 1989). This became a dominating factor to present against his critics. However, his theories proved a good factor for him to promote his ideas to individuals (Luckin, 1989). In this connection, Habermas’s simplest expectations for communicative agent can be witnessed from the following lines, in which Habermas (1981/1984) states:

If we assume that the human species maintains itself through the socially coordinated activities of its members and that this coordination is established through communication—and in certain spheres of life, through communication aimed at reaching agreement—then the reproduction of the species also requires satisfying the conditions of a rationality inherent in communicative action. (p. IX)

In this regard, the advancement of Arab-West international relations and potential agreements need to be integrated to include productive and rational communication strategies that aim at coordinating effective activities, providing clarifications and strengthening the core value of critical reflection and communicative action among all parties involved. Additionally, Habermas (1981/1984) states:

In the atomistic perspective of much of modern thought, the subject stands over against a world of objects to which it has two basic relations: representation and action. Accordingly, the type of rationality associated
with this model is the *cognitive-instrumental* rationality of a subject capable of gaining knowledge about a contingent environment and putting it to effective use in intelligently adapting to and manipulating that environment. By stressing the fact that the goal-directed actions of different individuals are socially coordinated, Habermas shifts our attention to the broader context of individual purposive actions, to the structures of social interaction in which teleological actions are located. (p. IX)

This Habermasian perspective towards the correlation between individual purposive actions and the structures of social interaction can assist the Arab Muslims and their Western counterparts to genuinely interpret discussions and other socio-political and religious affairs based on rational understanding, effective representation and action for producing contemporary perceptions.

The biased interpretations of certain Western authorities, including the U.S., the UK and Russian governments towards the ongoing socio-political dilemmas can be attributed to the fragile type of communication between the Western world and the MENA region. For example, Dokhan, 2008 states that *Arab-West Report*, that works on translating Arab viewpoints and media for Western consumption has an archive of ten years focussing on Arab-West relations. Additionally, the archive consists of mostly Egyptian press which is insufficient to draw on conclusions and provide constructive interpretations (Dokhan, 2008). In this connection, this example tends to emphasise the crucial necessity to have an effective communication strategy that is comprehensive, reliable and accurate to provide a deeper and clearer perception of Arab Muslims.
and Western political and diplomatic international relations for better political outcomes. Habermas asserts that for life to continue the process of survival, it has to abide by the rational surroundings of communicative action (Habermas, 1981/1984).

In this regard, the reason behind Habermas’s assertion is that individuals are in the habit of harmonising their activities and exertions through actions that are followed out by criticisable validity claims (Habermas, 1981/1984). Considering this, Habermas makes robust statements in his theory of communicative action, and his claims should be acted upon by intellectuals who seek to apply the idealised defence to Habermas’s concepts according to the exclusive concept of rationality (Habermas, 1981/1984). Moreover, Habermas illustrates that if one is to assume that the human activity is reserved via communication between individuals, then the fact that human beings prevail, goes beyond rationality assumptions that are prevalent in human communications (Habermas, 1981/1984).

On the contrary, the continuous Western interferences and lack of rationality since the 2003 Invasion of Iraq, and the U.S.-led intervention in the Syrian conflict since 2011, have increased a feeling among Arabs and mainly Muslims that the Western agendas towards the MENA region are primarily motivated by religious ideologies (Dokhan, 2008). Furthermore, what is believed to be a transformative moment by Americans towards the Arabs post 9/11 made Arabs view Americans as vehement, egocentric and advocates of greediness (Altwaiji, 2014). However, albeit George W. Bush justified the invasion of Iraq in
2003 by quoting certain Biblical prophecies (Spector, 2014), the point of religion as a stimulus can be disputed as there are other existing motives from the Western side that interfere and impose political sentiments on allied Arab rulers. In this context, it can be noted that problems occur not because of religions, but due to the issues that have already existed in the MENA region, and have been induced by certain Western interventions post the Arab Spring in 2011.

Looking at the ongoing uprisings and military scenarios in various parts of the MENA region that have been gaining speed, the U.S. has made some foreign policy changes towards the MENA region, by allowing other coalition forces to take part and share leadership, rather than playing the key role itself (Byman, 2013b). Furthermore, the international community led by Western leaders found it challenging to maintain their long strategic international relations with Arab dictators after the outbreak of revolutionary waves that occurred in several countries such as Tunisia in 2010 and Egypt in 2011 (Byman, 2013b). Therefore, Western leaders began to appraise their responsibilities in the very early stages of the Arab spring and realise that a political reform in Arab countries is not far away, and preferred to take Arab demanded reforms into consideration (Wilson, 2014). Moreover, as soon as the Arab Spring fired its first spark on 18 December 2010, it immediately presented a rise of political Islamic parties across the MENA region, followed by a dramatic fall of these political parties (Al-Anani, 2012). However, the political transitions and alterations that have occurred to long-lasting and authoritarian Arab ruling governments were not satisfactory, nor they brought in any constructive economic or socio-political reforms to fulfil the objectives of the
Arab Spring supporters; in fact deteriorated the situation and increased the death toll among civilians across the MENA region (Calfano & Marktanner, 2014). In addition, Calfano and Marktanner, (2014) believe that the attempts to swiftly transition a ruling government into a democratic one lead to limited political achievements in the way of a pragmatic political reform. Hence, history of politics suggests that it is of high importance to strategically consolidate democratic principles rather than aiming at ousting current political actors and potentially replacing them with uncertain opposition.

Experts in the field of comparative politics believe that there is an increasing interest in consolidating democratic principles compared to changing political actors or making new constitutional arrangements (Calfano & Marktanner, 2014). However, unlike these political beliefs, it can be stated that the political Islamic parties in the MENA region lacked the efficiency and determination needed to consolidate democratic principles in light of the Arab Spring; hence, increased the deficiencies that surrounded their socio-political initiatives and approaches. As a result, the reform proposal of Islamic parties was then subject to further examination in order to figure out the parties’ responsibilities and commitments to democracy, pluralism, individual freedoms, and to provide a comprehensive political and social reform. On the other hand, both Cavatorta, (2012) and Bradley, (2012) point out that Islamists did not play a key role or trigger the Arab uprisings; yet, they sought authority, and eventually ended up hijacking the Arab Spring. Their perspective is also supported by
Bradley (2012) who strongly believes that the MB worked fervently to hijack the Arab Spring.

These estimations are subject to further argument, as they do not consider the oppressive, despotic and longstanding ruling governments that motivated the Islamists to seek power and socio-political reforms. As a result of oppression and despotism by Arab authorities, the popularity of Islamic movements has become sturdier, and the number of thinkers and intellectuals interested in investigating them further has increased (Ayoob, 2008). On the other hand, Esposito and Shahin (2013); and Dalacoura (2007) state that most political Islamic parties have worked towards promoting moderation and democracy that calls for equal human rights and mutual democratic principles within their religious ideological discourse. However, it can be pointed out that the structural shortcomings and lack of policy mechanism of the MB were evident in their political pursuance during the Arab Spring. Conversely, it can be stated that the consequences of the Arab Spring give clues that these political parties were not given sufficient time to prove themselves.

From a European perspective, Teti (2012) believes that conceptual structure and therefore policy implications of the European claims of Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity (PfDSP) have not been updated to suit the ongoing changes in the MENA region, particularly in both Tunisia and Egypt. For example, Teti (2012) illustrates that the strategic document PfDSP that was released in response to the Arab Spring in 2011 and its guidelines contradicted the initial sections issued in it, compared to its more concrete provisions. Additionally, although the subject of social justice in the first PfDSP was referred to, it was,
however, incomprehensive, and indirectly connected social justice with democratic principles in another sentence (Teti, 2012). In other words, previous major policy documents that have been released by PfDSP before the Arab Spring undeniably indicate shortcomings of targets presented to the EU Democracy Assistance (DA) (Teti, 2012).

In this connection, the old-fashioned European approach to resolving political issues only allows the EU to replicate similar misconceptions that took place prior to 2011 in the MENA region and political marginalisation. Therefore, the poor reputation of EU attempts in formulating new political approaches remains unclear from the Arab Muslim perspective. To resolve this, Habermas reveals that the capacity to perform the communicative action and to act rationally and contemplate about any disputed validity claims is part of the developmental logically advanced stage among the wide circle of competent species (Habermas, 1981/1984). Communicative rationality is necessary for developmental and logical terms and for it be primary, there has to be a necessity for the existence of rational agents. This is because communicative action relies heavily on tactics that contain rational interpretations (Habermas, 1981/1984). This suggests that updated and comprehensive European models to promote rational interpretations of democracy across the MENA region can enhance the opportunities needed to revisit European approaches of supporting democratisation (Teti, 2012; Cavatorta & Pace, 2010). Additionally, the EU’s democracy assistance policy framework sees itself as innovative and responsive to the demands of revolutions. This idea is supported by
several authors, such as Echagüe and Youngs (2005), Leigh (2011), Tocci and Cassarino (2011), Cavatorta and Pace (2010), Schimmelfennig and Scholtz (2008). Authors, including Teti (2012), argue that such a framework is limited and incapable of analysing the text itself in-depth. To resolve this, Teti considered it necessity to investigate the conversational construction of the three Ds Democracy, Development and Delivery by using critical discourse analysis structures. In this connection, the EU responded to the Arab uprising by relying primarily on textual analysis of key policy documents and that earlier policy strategies skipped the claims of a qualitative break in it prior to the 2011 uprisings. As a result, the EU responses to the Arab uprising lacked a holistic framework approach that can pragmatically produce political democratisation in the MENA region, which consists of practical substantive dimensions for collaborative international relations between the West and MENA region, rather than hypothetical theories. On the other hand, there is a necessity for Western governments to structure a political approach that sets up the EU to become a positive normative foreign policy and role model actor that does not divide, but bridges socio-cultural and democratic dilemmas. In other words, a more systematic textually oriented approach to EU foreign policy structures may enhance the Arab-West international relations, and lead to transparent and applicable Western foreign policies towards the MENA region. Historically, Western governments attempted in two occasions in the last two centuries to reconfigure the political system of the MENA region (Kaunert et al., 2014).
Currently, there is an undeniable reality that the MENA region in general and the Arab world in particular are still experiencing variations of socio-political, educational and religious dilemmas and changes. These uncertain dilemmas and changes tend to present the Western world with platforms of socio-political misinterpretations and lack of understanding, and in reality, raise concerns over the applicability and validity of Western foreign policies towards the region (Kaunert et al., 2014). For example, the fragile international relations between the U.S. and the Arab masses in the MENA region have been surrounded by forms of suspicion and uncertainty, especially regarding the U.S.’s continuous and unlimited protection of Israel, which potentially raises concerns among nations in the MENA region, and further deteriorates U.S. relations with Arab nations (Kaunert et al., 2014). Additionally, Kaunert et al. (2014) believe that the U.S. is concerned over its geo-strategic and economic interests in the MENA region; hence, it doubts the competence of influential non-state actors to contest the regional status quo, which potentially plays a critical role in determining U.S. foreign policies towards the region.

The close geographic location of Europe to the MENA region has instead encouraged European political actors and decision makers to reconfigure their strategic policies in order to confront security challenges and terrorism threats. In this context, Kaunert et al. (2014) state:

The European Security Strategy (ESS), adopted in 2003, identified a number of key threats (terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure, organized crime) facing the EU
today. It emphasized the impact of the EU’s neighbourhood on EU security, arguing that ‘[neighbours] who are engaged in violent conflict, weak states where organised crime flourishes, dysfunctional societies or exploding population growth on its borders all pose problems for Europe’. More recently, the 2008 report on the implementation of the ESS emphasized that these threats and challenges ‘[had] not gone away’, but instead had become ‘more complex’, thus underlining the importance of developing a ‘greater engagement with [the EU’s] neighbourhood’. (pp. 498-499)

Considering this strategic perspective, it can be stated that there is an explicit necessity that indicates forms of inadequacy and shortage of rationality in Western foreign policies, and calls for the implementation of effective engagement strategies between Western and Arab nations to actively comprehend the socio-political and military issues at hand, and provide resolutions. However, this can be enhanced via the rational guidelines of Habermas where he contemplates the conditions of rationality for both subjects, be it the speaker or the acting one. Similarly, while analysing Habermas’s theory of Communicative action, it can be seen that Habermas did not disregard fundamental essence from the intuitive meaning of individual rationality (Habermas, 1981/1984). In fact, Habermas illustrates that the close link between the concept of knowledge and rationality shows that the rationality of a concept is dependent on the accuracy of knowledge manifested in it (Habermas, 1981/1984). In addition to this, Habermas adumbrates rationality which relies on the subjective interpretations, however, his rejection of
relativist theory commits him to subjects and objects that give in to the factuality of strongest sense of faith (Habermas, 1981/1984). Aside from this, Habermas asserts that any expressions of rationality are assessed in light of three matters which are, the internal links between the semantic count of such expressions, their surroundings of validity and the reasons that are provided for the genuineness of declarations (Habermas, 1981/1984).

Importantly, it can be stated that the concept of rationality and the accuracy of the knowledge demonstrated in it can lead to effective handling approaches of common interests, since the information collected is validated according to the conditions surrounding it. Nevertheless, Kaunert et al. (2014) demonstrate that there are only a few European strategic policies, including the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Union for the Mediterranean (UM), and the Eastern Partnership (EAP) that strive to systematically confront shared security concerns between neighbours of Western nations, and seek to strengthen bilateral relations between neighbours based on common interests. However, it can be understood that the ENP is currently designated with forms of inadequacy and inefficiency, particularly when dealing with security affairs and demands of both Europe and its neighbours (Kaunert et al., 2014). In this connection, to enhance communication and interaction approaches with Arab Muslims, future Western diplomats and politicians need to critically reflect the meanings behind the following statement of Habermas (1981/1984) in which he states:

The communicative model of action does not equate action with communication. Language is a means of communication which serves
mutual understanding, whereas actors, incoming to an understanding with one another so as to coordinate their actions, pursue their particular aims. . .

Concepts of social action are distinguished by how they specify this coordination among the goal-directed actions of different participants— as the interlacing of egocentric calculations of utility, as a socially integrating consensus about norms and values instilled through cultural tradition and socialization, or as reaching understanding in the sense of a cooperative process of interpretation. . .The interpretive accomplishment on which cooperative processes [of situation definition] are based represent the mechanism for coordinating action; communicative action is not exhausted by the act of reaching understanding. (p. IX)

3.6.3 Highlighting the Necessity for a Diplomatic Training Program for Western Diplomats and Politicians

The mission of Western representatives to factually scrutinise, analyse and respond to the intransigent socio-political, religious, economic and regional dilemmas facing the Arab nations in the MENA region is a convoluted mission that requires an inestimable visualisation, pragmatism and comprehension away from the modern-day capitalist world and vested interests. Therefore, considering the Habermasian analysis and illustrations that have been underlined throughout the fields of analysis, it can be stated that the declining abilities of Western representatives to rationally interact with the Arab public has become the norm. This indicates the necessity to pursue alternative Western socio-political approaches that can assist in eliminating the existing apprehensions among Arab
Muslims and Western counterparts alike. In other words, there is an emerging exigency for Western diplomats and politicians to develop inclusive strategies that would potentially help them in dealing with various socio-political and religious matters, particularly those concerning Arab Muslims such as political Islam.

Consequently, the illustrations and the Habermasian analysis applied indicate a necessity to devise a contemporary diplomatic training program for Western diplomats and politicians that can be delivered by rational, well-trained and qualified instructors to productively address the various forms of misunderstandings and vested interests that are forming the debates on both sides.

In addition, the illustrations and the Habermasian analysis pinpointed a lack of communicative rationality, critical reflection and understanding towards the way Arab Muslims perceive their future political visions. This is where the application of Habermas’s intuitions has helped the dissertation and provided epistemological justifications and resolutions that promoted and asserted an opinion that accountable people can exhibit behaviours of being coherent (Rienstra & Hook, 2006). Applying this perception towards the context of communicative action, people or individuals with the traits of being responsible can play out their roles of creating a community based on effective communication (Rienstra & Hook, 2006). In this connection, Habermas indicates the talent people have towards owning the ability to instantiate intersubjectively on the grounds of being valid claims (Rienstra & Hook, 2006). This is of high importance, particularly when addressing future Arab-West international relations, since there is an increased exigency among Western representatives to comprehend the
interpretations of political Islam and its visions from ontological perspectives. This is because the current methods of Western international relations theory of engagement have been primarily derived from various philosophical foundations of international relations and disregarded ontological grounds (Alruwaih, 2014).

Strictly speaking, Western diplomats and politicians need to rationally recognise all the facts and figures related to ideology of political Islam; hence, in return, scrutinise the responses of current Western foreign policies towards such facts and figures. When doing so, Western diplomats and politicians will develop a great way of understating the empirical and analytic way of knowing for a more effective way of comprehending the socio-political and regional issues facing the Arab nations in the MENA region. This illustration is supported by Habermas’s epistemological theory of knowing, that indicates an inevitability to comprehend political affairs and social matters in critical and rational styles (Lovat, 2013a). In this context, the illustrations along with the Habermasian analysis applied throughout the dissertation indicated a lack of ability among Western diplomats and politicians to implement ontological perceptions when debating a domain of discourse as a communication tool, without the necessity to apply common ways of understanding.

Possessing operative communication strategy that is inclusive, dependable and accurate to provide a deeper and clearer perception of Arab Muslims and Western political and diplomatic international relations is needed in future Western diplomatic training programs. By the same token, According to Held (1980), Habermas intuitions aim at facilitating unique theoretical platforms to bring
together various schools of thought. This is where Western diplomats and politicians need to work harder in order to enhance the circle of exploration and transformation strategies and promote criticism of ideology. When applying such Habermasian notions, the dissertation has been able to specify a lack of adequacy in current Western foreign policies and applicability on non-Western societies, especially Arab Muslims. This has also assisted the dissertation to highlight the necessity of applying a religious based knowledge and proven historical Islamic thought within future Western diplomatic training programs for a better understanding of the way Arab Muslims perceive political Islam.

Additionally, Weatherby et al. (2017) emphasise the necessity to modify the current Western foreign policies towards the MENA region, in order to create platform of rationality and at least minimise the threat posed globally by various terrorist and extremist groups. For these reason, it is pivotal for Western diplomats and politicians to rationally engage with Arab Muslims and establish accommodating diplomatic and foreign polices training programs that emphasise the important role of democratic principles, mutual communication, constitutional arrangements; rational reflection, and self-criticism and effective engagement. This is perhaps why specialists of comparative politics point out the increasing interest in reinforcing democratic principles compared to changing political players or creating new constitutional arrangements (Calfano & Marktanner, 2014).

Other perceptions on European strategies include the work of Teti (2012) who demonstrates that the conceptual structure of the European claims of PfDSP needs to be updated in accordance with the current state of affairs in the MENA
region. Therefore, the illustrations and the Habermasian analysis applied throughout the fields of analysis suggest that an updated and comprehensive diplomatic training program for Western diplomats and politicians that rationally promotes democracy across the MENA region along with an in-depth understanding of the freedom of political choices need to be devised. In this context, the potential training program for Western diplomats and politicians will include various constructive concepts, including rationality, critical reflection; engagement, criticism of ideology and unrestrained self-determining politics. However, the mission of devising such a contemporary training program cannot be accomplished from the researcher’s perspective without the introduction and application of Habermas’s critical theory and his theory of communicative action as constructive tools for analysing the capacity of current Western foreign policies and establishing contemporary socio-political and religious approaches towards the MENA region. This is particularly important to transform people’s beliefs and attitudes for consolidated Arab-West international relations.

In addition, the conclusions drawn from such a diplomatic training may play an effective role in changing assumptions about Islam in the Western setting, and impelling new diplomatic practices among Arab Muslims and Western diplomats and politicians for improved international relations. This may also fulfil the conditions necessary for coherent future international relations between Arab Muslims and Western politicians and diplomats. This would then assist in clearing the chaos caused by political confusion and religious misunderstanding, as well as helping to develop an international political theory that acknowledges human
interdependence in the world community that is conscious of existing Arab Muslim and Western political and diplomatic necessities. Furthermore, the promotion of awareness through the intended political international theory is needed as a competent tool for the accomplishment of international consideration and collaboration, and to reaffirm the cooperative obligation of individuals towards each other in order to overcome the existing socio-political and religious dilemmas.

3.7 Summary

To recap, the disturbances in the MENA region, as well as the rise of political Islam, can be considered as two main topics that often play a pivotal role in putting the MENA region and its associated socio-political and religious affairs in a global spotlight. In this regard, the chapter has drawn attention to five important fields of analysis, including the historical and present socio-political and regional challenges facing the Arab nations along with the ramifications of Western intervention in the MENA region. Moreover, religious based knowledge and proven historical Islamic thought on international relations have been thoroughly discussed for cultivating stronger Arab-West international relations. Importantly, the chapter has illustrated the necessity for a newly devised diplomatic training program for Western diplomats and politicians that deals rationally with the demands of Arab Muslims. Moreover, the chapter has discussed, applied and analysed various Habermasian intuitions; identified the areas of weakness of Arab-West
international relations and exemplified how such intuitions can improve Arab-West international relations with accordance to Habermas’s conceptual and theoretical perceptions.

Nevertheless, the fact that there is a vital necessity for addressing Arab-West international relations, along with the interpretations of political Islam from ontological perspectives, the measure of academic research in the field remains unsatisfactorily limited and requires further ontological attention. One can notice this, especially when the current methods of Western international relations theory of engagement have, to date, emanated primarily from the philosophical foundations of international relations and overlooked ontological grounds (Alruwaih, 2014). Accordingly, the abilities of Western diplomats and politicians to utilise ontological commitments when discussing domains of international relations associated with Arab Muslims have been enhanced and guided throughout the fields of analysis. This has been accomplished by the introduction and application of Habermas’s critical theory and his theory of communicative action, along with other Habermasian epistemological insights and self-reflective analysis against the relevant socio-political events and literature.

These enhanced abilities include the significance of an in-depth understanding of the freedom of political choices, rationality, critical reflection and engagement, criticism of ideology; unrestrained self-determining politics as constructive communication tools for interconnected Arab-West international relations. In this connection, it can be understood that the advocacy for rationality, critical thinking and benevolent reflection can potentially enhance the rostrum of
contemporary thought for a more interdependent consideration of social matters (Lovat, 2013a). Similarly, understanding the concept of culture is not an easy mission, but rather a complex undertaking that involves challenging interpretations, and that is due to its correlation with people’s life (Alrosan, 2017). Additionally, Alrosan (2017) elucidates that various elements of one’s culture is expressed through language; hence, it can be stated that socio-political and religious hindrances arise as a result of this and involve constructive efforts to overcome, particularly when dealing with cultures and rationality of understanding. This is where the dissertation endeavoured to proof that the role of Habermas’s intuitions can be operative, assists in overcoming such hindrances in rational manners, and enhances methods of critical-reflection, and therefore, self-criticism.

The following chapter presents a discussion of the Habermasian analysis applied throughout the fields of analysis. Similarly, the chapter also identifies and discusses the findings.
Chapter 4: Discussion of the Analysis

4.1 Overview

This chapter identifies the scopes mentioned in Chapter 3 (fields of analysis) in which Habermas’s critical theory and his theory of communicative action were applied against the literature directed to interpret the ideology of political Islam. Then, the chapter pinpoints the historical dynamics behind the popularity of political Islam among Arab Muslims in the MENA region. In addition, the chapter goes on to indicate how different these historical factors tend to be from existing perceptions about political Islam in the Western governmental and diplomatic setting. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the current gaps in Western diplomatic training and the existing hindrances in inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial dialogues. Essentially, throughout the scopes discussed, the chapter delivers insightful ramifications for a new Western diplomatic training program based on the findings derived from applying Habermas’s descriptive, interpretive and critically self-reflective methods of analysis against the relevant fields of analysis.

4.2 The Application of Habermas’s Critical Theory and the Theory of Communicative Action on Political Islam

This section endeavours to respond to the first question, that is, what would political Islam look like when Habermas’s descriptive, interpretive and critically self-reflective methods of analysis are applied to it? To achieve this, the domains in which Habermas’s interpretation can enhance the ideology behind political Islam were highlighted.
As illustrated and analysed in chapter 3, specifically, (subchapter 3.5.2), a special attention was directed towards the ideology of political Islam and the application of Habermas’s descriptive, interpretive and critically self-reflective analysis to it. In this context, the (subchapter 3.5.2) enabled the identifications of various conflicting interpretations of Islam and its politics that contribute further towards the importance of this dissertation. These interpretations range from fruitful interpretations of Islam and its political foundations (Talbi, 1995), to indications of a lack of cohesive interaction and association clarities between its politics and religious guidelines (Ayoob, 2008), to the exigency to acknowledge the influence of political Islam in the global political system (Mandaville, 2007). For these reasons, the dissertation suggests that these contradictory interpretations tend to create various forms of political and educational suspicion and misapprehension, particularly around the notion of political Islam in the Western inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial dialogues.

Subsequently, the analysis pinpoint the shortcomings of the political Islamic approaches presented by political Islamic movements along with representatives and subsequently suggests a unique way to address the existing misapprehensions about political Islam through the application of various Habermasian notions. This is for the purpose of attempting to alter the exiting perceptions about Islam and its politics in the Western world, and bridge the existing gap of misunderstanding. In this context, having identified both sides of the debate in chapter 3, the interpretations are analysed based on several Habermasian notions derived from Habermas’s critical theory and his theory of
communicative action, which will assist in shaping the appropriate approaches employed to tackle those conflicting interpretations and provide rational clarifications.

In the general view of the analysis employed on the ideology of political Islam, it would appear that the disapproval of political observers towards the current approaches employed within political Islam emanated from multiple aspects. These noteworthy aspects include the lack of practicality, rationality, and the non-existence of any comparative analysis of political Islamic activities (Ayoob, 2008). However, considering that this dissertation is purely of an analytical and theoretical nature, the analysis will be given a more cohesive meaning when combined in a solid piece of information.

Based on the Habermasian analysis applied against the ideology of political Islam, there was a series of gaps and elements related to this political and religious ideology that needed to be fulfilled and addressed respectively. In an initial phase, the dissertation established an analytical framework that elucidates the nature of the current approaches of political Islam and its ramifications towards international relations, particularly Arab-West international relations. The proposed approach, which relies on rational, structuralist, descriptive, interpretive and critically self-reflective analysis, is devised exclusively for the analysis of political Islam in this dissertation. In addition, the proposed approach suggests that the current ramifications and understandings of political Islam, particularly among Western nations and international relations, are the outcomes of the current boundaries set by the political and educational nature of international relations, the irrational
approaches employed by the supporters of political Islam, and existing misapprehensions about such a political and religious ideology in the Western setting.

Arguably, the current approaches of political Islam towards international relations tend to lack a constructive and authentic method of knowing. These approaches do not promote the self-reflective knower as a balanced knowledge agent who thoroughly endeavours to addressing the correlation between their own socio-political affairs and interests, whilst rationally comprehending other contrasting socio-political, or even cultural perceptions and interests. The chapter further contends that political Islam needs to develop a pragmatic Habermasian approach that specifically deals with human affairs, religious interpretations and other Western media perceptions related to its political agenda. Furthermore, the dissertation argues that the existing systematic methodology of political Islam needs to facilitate Habermasian platforms that comprehend rationale behind the effective disciplines in order to address the interests and freedoms of all members of society, and most critically, transition these contemporary reflective platforms into the Western world via rational and reflective methodologies.

This chapter is therefore concerned with developing reflective Habermasian practices of self-knowing through the application of critical or self-reflective attitudes for generating sensible engagements to transform self and community (Lovat, 2005). Additionally, based on Habermas’s intuitions, the analysis argues that the global political systems are distinctive of nature based on a different configuration of socio-political, cultural, economic, historic and identity-
related features. The analysis suggests that political Islam needs to employ a constructive human agency that is, cross-cultural, transcends religions and ethnic differences and brings different schools of socio-political and religious thought together. In this connection, the analysis contends that the potential human agency, once effectively utilised, will assist in determining the foundation of people’s interests and related foreign policies towards nations.

The analysis also asserts that Habermas’s instincts can motivate the supporters of political Islam to consider people’s interest, socio-political and religious affairs and privileges in technical, practical and emancipatory approaches (Habermas, et al., 1974). In addition to this pivotal point, the analysis stresses the significance of applying the Habermasian concept of public sphere in the philosophical foundation of political Islam, where the application of rationality in critical debates occurs, and potentially leads to a pragmatic configuration of the distribution of power (Habermas, 1962/1989). In this way, the dialogues related to discussing political Islam can develop into a rational domain where Western diplomats, politicians, policymakers, academics and members of civil society have the opportunities to freely express and reflect on the socio-political and religious perceptions and interests of all members of civil society (Keane, 1995).

Furthermore, the analysis suggests that the applied Habermasian notions can lead to the establishments of effective communication strategies within the notions of political Islam for improved socio-political and religious conclusions.

This approach is supported by the Habermas’s assertion where constructive communication can play an indispensable role that brings people together in
atmospheres of rationally where they can liberally share their perceptions on essential matters (Habermas, et al., 1974). On the other hand, the Habermasian analysis suggests that political Islam needs to strengthen its rational foundations in order to create balanced political approaches that ensure the application of various effective and contemporary strategies including, public critical discussions; rational speeches, effective social actions and interaction and rational criticism. Similarly, the analysis suggests that presentation of the ideology of political Islam needs to also generate creative platforms that enable people to develop forms of rationality, constructive communication and reflective leadership. This is in addition to the significant ramifications of addressing the purposes behind the concept of being critical or rational in order to question the societal norms and comprehend the concept of freedom and social arrangements.

The analysis proposes that the representatives and supporters of political Islam are required to effectively grasp the significance behind comprehending the technical interest, emancipatory interest, and practical interest of all members of society in order to develop constructive conclusions. By the same token, political Islam needs to construct scenarios of ideal speech to discuss the scopes of its political policies in rational debates. In this regard, the potential policies need to be guided by a logical framework that is based on the concept of liberation, morality and transparent democracy. As a result, the analysis suggests that the utilisation of the discussed Habermasian intuitions can be fruitful if not necessary in order to enhance the future of Arab-West international relations and clarify the misconceptions surrounding the ideology of political Islam for healthier
communication strategies. For example, these Habermasian intuitions can contribute towards the creation of communicative schemes within political Islam based on various desired and contemporary concepts such freedom, truth, self-criticism, and social justice.

Habermas’s critical theory and his theory of communicative action can formulate procedures of normative standards that are instituted upon the structure of effective communication and social actions. By the same token, the analysis suggests that Habermas’s concept of rational criticism can further assist the characteristics of political Islam in ways that cannot be circumvented. This according to Habermas et al. (1974) will support the concept of criticism and the standards of validity along with respecting the opinions presented by others as forms of arrangement. In this case, political Islamic approaches can deliver a role model of critical reflection that invites the rationality of people over other affiliated matters (Schaefer, et al., 2013). This can also lead to ontologically and pragmatically evolve diverse forms of rationality, specifically when Western diplomacy and foreign policies are concerned; hence, the previously discussed public sphere can serve as a mechanism of transformation and enhancement of foreign policies. Therefore, political Islam may significantly benefit from Habermas’s concepts of interrogating societal norms and incorporating the social life of others and improving them accordingly (Habermas, et al., 2013).

The Habermasian concept of knowledge grasping can be categorised into various discourses such as social sciences, natural sciences, psychology in international relations (Terry, 1997), and hence have the potential to expand the
circle of knowledge that political Islam can deliver to society and culture. Once integrated into the ideology of political Islam, the Habermasian concept of emancipatory interest can deliver the identification process of social barriers and exterminating them over time (Held, 1980). In addition, such understanding may lead the supporters of political Islam to provide rational frames of evaluation related to the methods of analysis of any subject and assist in eliminating the encountered difficulties. That is why Habermas (1981/1984) shows a great optimism towards the abilities of people, as members of any society will benefit from such opportunities to create interactive platforms for people to engage freely with each other and constrictively utilise the multiple variations of grasped knowledge (Habermas, 1981/1984). This according to Habermas will guide people to liberating themselves from the restraints applied by societies (Dallmayr, 1988).

In this connection, the Habermasian notions on liberation and morality can further guide the existing interpretations of political Islam and present them to non-Islamic societies in rational and principled demeanors.

Habermas’s concept of social structure can identify forms of rational speech in political Islam, which potentially lead to reaching the objective of common understanding (Dallmayr, 1988). Therefore, the analysis suggests that by applying the previous notions, democracy, constitution and laws and policies related to political Islam can be accessible to the public opinion; hence, assist in eliminating the existing misapprehensions as all members of society will be made conscious towards their interests and understanding of self-governance (Modak-
Truran, 1997). Therefore, the society will become more benevolent and ready to mitigate the barriers between various segments of society (Modak-Truran, 1997).

Considering the role of Habermas’s notions that have been applied in this dissertation, particularly when placing his analytical and theoretical approaches into practice, it can be argued that the ideology of political Islam may have the potential to facilitate forms of a critical gaze to be integrated, applied and discussed to various areas of expertise related to Arab-West international relations and religious affairs. By the same token, Habermas’s notions may enable the prospective purpose of separating the exiting assumptions that have been sitting behind an arguable literature and other academic works. Additionally, the ramifications derived from the Habermasian analysis could potentially go beyond the targeted audience of this dissertation and enhance other necessary fields such as education, interreligious dialogues and spiritual development, morality and socio-political and economic arenas.

4.3 The Popularity of Political Islam among Arab Muslims in the MENA Region and the Existing Perceptions in the Western Setting

This section aims at responding to the second and third research questions respectively. These questions are the following: What are the historical factors that influence political Islam among Arab Muslims in the MENA region? And how do these historical factors diverge from existing fundamental assumptions about political Islam in the Western governmental and diplomatic setting? To respond to these questions, this section identified the primary factors behind the popularity of political Islam among Arab Muslims as well as the existing assumptions about it in
the Western world as illustrated in chapter 3 (fields of analysis). Finally, this section applied various Habermasian notions emanated from Habermas’s critical theory and his theory communicative action, along with critically self-reflective interpretations.

In implementing the Habermasian analytical and theoretical approach in practice, chapter 3 carried out comparative elucidations and analysis between the way Arab Muslims in the MENA region perceive the ideology of political Islam and conversely, the way it is comprehended in the Western world. In this regard, chapter 3 identified the contradictory standpoints as seen in the elucidations and analysis that have been applied throughout the chapter. Furthermore, the chapter revealed that, Arab Muslims in the MENA region tend to perceive Islam and its political ambitions via constructive stances, and believe in the progressive contributions that their religion and its politics can make to society and culture.

For these reasons, Arab Muslims possess a strong sense of confidence in the role that political Islam can play in their societies, especially when considering the beneficial prospects of Islam that could potentially lead to the initialisation of pragmatic socio-political, religious and economic transitions among their societies (Ayubi, 2003). Additionally, these prospects according the elucidations and analysis applied include charity, forgiveness, tolerance, honesty, morality, kindness, justice; fulfilment of the promise, decent speech; trustworthiness, patience, truth, anger management, sincerity, and mutual respect. In addition, chapter 3 highlighted that the negative outcomes of the activities that have taken place against despotic Arab regimes have all contributed towards the approval of
political Islamic parties (Al-Anani, 2012). Furthermore, chapter 3 demonstrated that other factors, including the lack of pragmatism in Western foreign policies along with existing socio-political, economic and religious delimmas (Al-Anani, 2012; Miqdad, 2015; Swansinger & Shehata, 2015), have also contributed towards the adoption of political Islam among Arab Muslims in the MENA region. This is in addition to the way political Islam is negatively interpreted in the Western world as an alternative challenger (Stephanous, 2010).

The elucidations and analysis applied also revealed that the influence of creative Islamic literature (Steigerwald, 2005), and the guiding principles of Islam in public affairs and commitment (AbuSulayman, 1991/1993) also play a pivotal role in the popularity of political Islam among Arab Muslims. Importantly, the elucidation and analysis identified the historical contributions of Islam during the Arab-Islamic civilisation of Al-Andalus (Corfis, 2009), the ontology of the Islamic thought (AbuSulayman, 1991/1993), and the Islamic mutual dialogues that safeguard moral education in general (Lovat, 2016), as main factors that encourage Muslims to trust in the improvement that Islam can create in society and culture.

Conversely, chapter 3 identified how these constructive perceptions of Islam and its politics among Arab Muslims diverge from the prevailing Western perceptions. In this context, chapter 3 revealed the platforms in which political Islam is perceived destructively among Western observers. These platforms range from a lack of pragmatic understanding of Islam as well as the misleading coverage of political Islam via mainstream Western media (Esposito, 2011). This is in addition to the existing suspicious misinterpretations of the Islamic law, to the
fear around the notion of implementing religious ideologies within secular Western societies; accusations of violence, terrorism, extremism, inflexibility, ignorance and apprehensions towards national security (Altwaiji, 2014; Brown, Brown & Richards, 2015). Furthermore, chapter 3 revealed that political Islam is viewed in the Western setting as a force with ambitions towards the seizure of authority (Roose, 2016). Arguably, this can be contributed to the willingness of Western authorities and desire to maintain their wide range geo-strategic and political interests in the MENA region.

Next in importance, the elucidations and analysis applied revealed that there is a concerning point that lies within the comfort of Western representatives towards the subjugation and extortion applied by various despotic Arab regimes in the MENA, since these tyrannical regimes tend to uphold the Western interests in the region (Burchill, 2015; Weatherby, et al., 2017). Equally important, chapter 3 revealed that various Western governments are well informed of the factors that have contributed towards the emergence of political Islamic movements in the MENA region, however, they have not changed their understanding of political Islam or political approaches (Ramadan, 2012). By the same token, the unwillingness of certain Western authorities to allow democracy to prevail in its Islamic configurations has been revealed (Wilson, 2014).

Based on the elucidated contradictory comprehensions of political Islam between Arab Muslims in the MENA region and Westerners, the dissertation suggests that the employment of various Habermasian perspectives in order to mitigate the misapprehensions and, importantly, create platforms for effective
communication, engagement and understanding that may have the potential to strengthen the fragile Arab-West dialogues. To achieve this, the dissertation suggests that these misapprehensions need to be acknowledged, addressed and debated through a Habermasian lens of analysis, especially as found in his epistemological insights, since there is an exigency to critically and rationally demonstrate the ongoing socio-political dilemmas (Lovat, 2013a). In effect, chapter 3 revealed that in order to empower Western diplomats and politicians with rational methods of understanding towards non-Western political and religious, Habermas’s critical theory and his theory of communicative action may constitute effective learning platforms for social interaction that is guided by an authentic knowledge knower, at one end, and produce benevolent action, at the other end.

In this context, the elucidations and analysis applied in chapter 3 revealed a necessity to implement a pragmatic Habermasian joint task for understanding the core value of democratic principles and the resoluteness of religion in order to strengthen the rationale of democracy and establish communicative action accordingly (Gordon, 2013). In addition, Habermas’s effective ways of communication along with the concept of mutual interaction can deliver pragmatic schemes to freely express socio-political insights and ambitions (Habermas, 1981/1984). Moreover, chapter 3 revealed that Habermas’s theory of communicative action and the application of its correlative matters of critical understanding can lead to constructive forms of comprehending the contemporary political life, rationality and understanding society (Habermas, 1981/1984).
In addressing the challenges arising from both sides of the debate, the Habermasian analysis suggests that future Arab-West international relations need to develop forms of rational communications to update the lived cultural experiences and create pragmatic answers to the emerging historical and modern-day experiments (Jacobson et al., 2017). This notion can particularly support Arab Muslims and Western diplomats and politicians to recognise their intentions before suggesting them for appraisal.

As to prepare constructive intuitions towards a better understanding of Arab-West socio-political matters, chapter 3 introduced significant Habermasian concepts that can be utilised in mutual dialogues, including critique and rational thinking in order to establish freedom and intelligible understanding (Lovat, Dally, Clement & Toomey, 2011). According to Schaefer et al. (2013), applying the Habermasian concept of rationality within mutual dialogues can lead to the production of constructive outcomes of social interaction and communicative action. In a Habermasian formation, these outcomes tend to be of high value, especially when discussing socio-political and religious matters and impelling educational agreements associated with exigency to understand the ideology of political Islam.

Towards the lack of pragmatic comprehension of socio-political and religious affairs among Arab Muslims and Westerners, as illustrated in chapter 3, the elucidations and analysis present the significance of applying the Habermasian concept of historical hermeneutic in dialogues, one in which representatives interact subjectively with each other whilst discussing various topics and
predicting the potential outcomes based on their interaction (Lovat, 2004). As a result of such interaction, facts become rationally comprehensible, particularly when the human cognitive interest and social thinking are unconstrained, which potentially lead to creating critically self-reflective ramifications (Always, 2005; Lovat, 2004).

Importantly, chapter 3 revealed that the Habermasian transformation of understanding can potentially lead to a change in public opinion on various matters, including the socio-political and religious dilemmas associated with Arab-Muslims. Therefore, Held (1980) asserts the role of Habermas’s critical theory that urges constructive communication techniques along with engagement or *praxis* to reinforce the learning platforms in order to reach dynamic outcomes. These Habermasian notions can support Western diplomats and politicians in reaching advanced levels of knowing and understanding. In addition, these notions can ultimately create practices of self-knowing and guide knowledge seekers towards a better understanding of the socio-political sphere of the MENA region (Lovat, 2005, 2013a). This is in addition to another Habermasian notion that lies within constructive communication in which resolving political speech in the public sphere along with responding to various characteristics of social historical modification and reinforcing rationality become a custom in mutual negotiations (Habermas, 1962/1989). Therefore, the exchange of good reason through mutual discussions becomes a reality (Habermas, 1976/1991b; Habermas, 1981/1984).

The dissertation suggests that the Habermasian intuitions have the prospective needed to develop profoundly not just our understanding of the
complete progressive measurements of rational people, but to enhance the transformation of critique and rational thinking; reinforce the essential platforms for convincing communication strategies, rationale and self-criticism. Furthermore, the Habermasian intuitions can ultimately create strategies of exploration and transformation of knowledge along with collaboration among different schools of thought (Held, 1980). This is particularly crucial, considering the different interpretations of thought among Arab Muslims in the MENA region and Western diplomats and politicians in the Western world.

4.4 The Current Gaps in Western Diplomatic Training and the Existing Hindrances in Inter-Governmental and Inter-Ambassadorial Dialogues

This section responds to the fourth research question, that is, what are the current gaps in Western diplomatic training and the existing hindrances in inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial dialogues? To address this question, this section identified the primary existing gaps in Western diplomatic training and the existing hindrances in inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial dialogues.

Finally, this section applied various Habermasian concepts based on Habermas’s critical theory and his theory of communicative action, along with critically self-reflective interpretations in order to essentially bridge the gap of misconception and strengthen Arab-West international relations.

In exploring the current gaps in Western diplomatic training and the existing hindrances in inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial dialogues, chapter 3 revealed a series of political shortcomings in Western approaches, specifically those devised to deal with non-Western societies. In addition, chapter
3 highlighted the associations of these Western political shortcomings with the economic, socio-political, regional instability; lack of education, poverty, and lack of security, let alone the poor conditions of wellbeing of Arab Muslims in the MENA region. In the same way, the elucidations and analysis applied in chapter 3 revealed an exigency for Western diplomats and politicians to thoroughly interact with Arab Muslims and establish cooperative foreign polices as well as a rational diplomatic training program. This is in order to enhance the process of knowledge grasping related to the MENA region and potentially improve the devastating socio-political and religious situation.

Importantly, the elucidations and analysis revealed a number of concerning negative implications associated with the current practices of Western foreign policies towards the socio-political and cultural dilemmas of MENA region. By the same token, the dissertation indicated that these dilemmas as illustrated in the elucidations and analysis do not only impact Arab Muslims, but also disturb the Western world in various forms, including the rise of misinterpretations and lack of understanding towards Arab Muslims. Notably, these dilemmas raise apprehensions over the stability and rationality of Western foreign policies, particularly when applied on non-Western societies (Kaunert et al., 2014).

When pondering the equivocal Western foreign policies and their questionable support to repressive regimes in the MENA region, chapter 3 revealed a sense of hostility intensification towards Western nations from the Arab masses (Kafaji, 2011). In this connection, the dissertation revealed that this may have been due to various practices of Western nations, including the UK in
reconciling with dictatorial regime such as the current regime of El-Sisi in Egypt (Marcus, 2015). Similarly, for example, the atmosphere surrounding the Arab masses and the Americans is filled with suspicion and uncertainty, especially when considering the U.S. actions towards Israel, compared to the U.S. approaches towards Arab nations (Kaunert et al., 2014); the ambiguous Western interferences and lack of rationality since the U.S. Invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Dokhan, 2008). This is in addition to the uncooperative Western foreign policies towards the demands of Arab Muslims in the MENA region (Weatherby et al., 2017).

Conversely, chapter 3 revealed slight modifications in Western foreign policies, particularly in the U.S. foreign policies towards the MENA region (Byman, 2013b). However, when examining the catastrophic state of affairs in the region, the dissertation concluded that it becomes inevitably clear that such modifications are limited in scope and pragmatic influence.

Arguably, the dissertation revealed that the Arab Spring was thought to be an opportunity for Western nations to reconcile with Arab Muslims and open new domains of solidarity, respect and mutual interaction. However, despite the initial support of some Western nations towards the Arab Spring (Wilson, 2014), the elucidations and analysis applied in chapter 3 exposed pessimistic outcomes, contradictions and uninformed political approaches implemented by leading Western nations. An additional subject of apprehension for Arab Muslims in the MENA region lies within the Western military involvements and arms sales to autocratic Arab regimes (Roberts, 2017). In this context, Teti (2012) points out a lack of practicality in the conceptual structure and policy implications of the
PfDSP and insufficiency of objectives within the European DA practices. Additionally, although the EU’s democracy assistance policy framework is applauded by many observers (Echagüe & Youngs, 2005); (Leigh, 2011); (Tocci & Cassarino, 2011); (Cavatorta & Pace, 2010); (Schimmelfennig & Scholtz, 2008), chapter 3 revealed a lack of comprehensive and capable framework in its approaches that can potentially enhance foreign polices (Teti, 2012). Furthermore, chapter 3 revealed an exigency directed towards the consolidation of democratic moralities compared to shifting political actors or creating new lawful arrangements (Calfano & Marktanner, 2014).

The dissertation revealed that Arab Muslims tend to associate Western foreign policies with the rise of terrorism and extremism (Dokhan, 2008). This is in addition to the general perception among Arabs that the Western foreign policies in solving the Syrian crisis tend to be unproductive. That is why Benn (2015) stresses that the UK requires alternative and genuine political policies to put an end to such a tragedy. In addition, chapter 3 revealed that despite the differences in policy making among Western nations, yet these nations tend to share the principles that lie within the notion of supporting their own political approaches (Altwaiji, 2014).

Considering the ebb and flow of Western inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial approaches in light of the current regional conflicts in the MENA and the associated global ramifications, it becomes inevitable to launch contemporary Western political approaches. It is also pivotal to bridge the gap of misapprehensions via the application of a rational and constructive sphere of
discussion that potentially increases the level of understanding and eliminates the vested interests. To achieve this, the dissertation suggests that Habermas’s perceptions towards the individual purposive actions and the structures of social interaction can present educational platforms of mutual discussions and critical reflection. In addition, the dissertation suggests that this will mitigate the level of biased interpretations and strengthen the communicative action and idealisation among people. For these reasons, the presentation of Habermas’s communication rationality as an entity that is built upon accuracy, concrete facts and associated understanding of society can determine approaches in which biased interpretations do not occur (Rienstra & Hook, 2006).

The Habermasian concept of communication rationality can also lead to the visualisation of facts, which potentially help in understanding the variations of society. Such a Habermasian concept can assist Western foreign policies in establishing effective, reliable and accurate communication strategy that takes into consideration the perceptions of Arab Muslims and address these perceptions accordingly. For this reason, Habermas applauds the rational surroundings of communicative action (Habermas, 1981/1984). In addition, Habermas expects communicative agent to be constructive in the public sphere and develop a communication strategy that leads to reaching agreement (Habermas, 1981/1984). In a word, Habermas’s critical theory and the theory of communicative action have the potential to enhance the coordination process of constructive activities, provide amplifications and reinforce the core value of critical reflection, self-criticism and communicative action among Arab Muslims and Western diplomats and
politicians. In this connection, the dissertation suggests that Habermas’s notions can enrich the understanding of Arab-Muslims and Western representative towards the concept of communicative rationality for enhancing the developmental and logical terms; hence, employing rational agents who seek rational interpretations (Habermas, 1981/1984).

In this regard, the dissertation suggests that Habermas’s theory of communicative action contains the potential of developing the fundamental essence of individual rationality and the accuracy of knowledge (Habermas, 1981/1984). For this reason, the assertion of Habermas towards communicative action where he states that individuals with the characteristics of being accountable can potentially create a community that appreciates effective communication and rationality (Rienstra & Hook, 2006). Thus, it can be understood that this notion has the potential to assist the methods of Western international relations theory of engagement in integrating various ontological grounds for effective communication outcomes (Alruwaih, 2014). The significance of such a Habermasian notion can theoretically guide representatives of Western government in acknowledging all the facts and figures related to the political ideology of Islam and examine the reactions of existing Western foreign policies towards as well.
4.5 Findings

The dissertation has scrutinised the ideology of political Islam and examined the factors that stimulate Arab Muslims in the MENA region to believe in such a religious and political ideology. The dissertation has also explored the contradictory perceptions among Arab Muslims and Westerners towards political Islam and identified the existing gaps in the Western setting. Following the application of Habermas’s intuitions throughout the field of analysis, various contemporary political and educational elements were identified and demonstrated extensively in chapter 4.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

As discussed in chapter 4, the Habermasian analytical and theoretical intuitions clearly reveal that there is current gap in the way Western diplomats, politicians, policymakers, think tanks and media reports perceive the ideology behind political Islam in the Western setting. In this connection, the findings have suggested that this gap of misapprehension have the potential to be rectified through the application of Habermas’s critical theory and his theory of communicative action. By the same token, the dissertation has suggested that Habermas’s philosophies tend to provide a transformational change, that is, auspicious to reshape Arab-West inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial relations and potentially provide ramifications for a contemporary diplomatic training program, whilst as the same time grounding us in our customs and traditions. In addition, Habermas’s intuitions on the significance of human communication and knowing of self along with critical and benevolent reflection;
rational and self-criticism as illustrated in chapter 4 have the potential to expand the circle of human virtue in order to build a cohesive human society, that is, developed upon, genuine human interaction, rationality and mutual respect and understanding. In other words, the researcher believes in the progressive democratic essence that Habermas’s notions can contribute to towards the desired reinforced Arab-West international relations.
Chapter 5: Diplomatic Training Program for Western Diplomats and Politicians: Towards Strengthened Future Arab-West International Relations

5.1 Overview

The main purpose of this chapter is to emphasise the fundamental role of Western inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial dialogues in effectively engaging Western diplomats and politicians with their Arab Muslim counterparts. Therefore, this chapter presents notions and procedures adopted in this dissertation, particularly in chapter 4 to develop a contemporary diplomatic training program for Western diplomats and politicians based on the Habermasian analysis implemented throughout the thesis. The intended diplomatic training program will present rational strategies derived from Habermas’s notions along with other critically self-reflective approaches to accommodate the existing dilemmas and differences in the Arab context; in other words, to enable Western diplomats and politicians to deal constructively with current socio-political, religious and regional challenges of the MENA region and strengthen Arab societies as well.

5.2 Western Inter-Governmental and Inter-Ambassadorial Relations

Western inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial relations along with public diplomacy play an indispensable role in engaging Western diplomats and politicians with their Arab Muslim counterparts in the MENA region. Additionally, it can be stated that leading Western authorities invest largely in their foreign policies and programmes of national self-promotion that are based on
distinct niche specialisation, freedom, democratic principles, trading opportunities, geography, and culture. However, in an era of advanced technology that involves the influence of social media networking sites, every individual can be aware of the use of internet and how to utilise it effectively for further exploration and scrutiny purposes, especially when concerned about political variations, cultural traditions and religious practices in the Western setting. Similarly, contemporary media platforms are playing a very important role in highlighting the polies and programmes established by political leaders, diplomats and government bodies.

Nevertheless, these sites on their own remain narrow to bridge the socio-political and religious dilemmas between the Arab Muslims and the Western world; hence, such illustrations highlight a much-needed effective communication and rational strategies that are devised within a contemporary diplomatic training program. This is for the purpose of accommodating these dilemmas and differences, and work on eliminating them in pragmatic manners. For this reason, many countries worldwide encourage their diplomats and politicians to get out into the society and establish constructive programmes and policies for the benefits of their own nations.

Governments dedicate a great deal of effort to establish and manage programs to train their diplomats and politicians, and make them able to contribute for the socio-political and cultural progress of their nations and promote such progress globally. However, the variations in religious beliefs, political systems, cultures and lack of pragmatism and effective communication strategies may be the hurdle in attempting at inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial relations
along with public diplomacy. Therefore, Western governments need to establish new beneficial strategies, especially when dealing with non-Western societies, including Arab Muslims in the MENA region. Moreover, when concerned about international diplomacy, peace commitment, and training of diplomats and politicians, the Arab Muslims and the Western representatives suffer frequently from considerable challenges, conflicts; socio-political and religious misunderstandings. These challenges arise largely due to the disparities and contrasts that exist between the two cultures, communities, politics and belief systems.

Undoubtedly, Western societies have maintained their policies quite strongly, however, barriers and misinterpretations remain active, especially when comparing Western foreign policies with policies and beliefs of Arab Muslims in the MENA region. Additionally, what is concerning is the fact that such existing approaches by certain Western governments, including Australia, the UK, the U.S. along with Russia impact the lives of people in MENA, and that is why Western initiatives struggle to leave a positive impact in various struggling Arab nations. For example, the Syrian people tend to have lost a great deal of confidence about Western initiatives as their nation continue to be torn apart by the use of chemical weapons, Western intervention and civil wars. Of equal importance, Western diplomats and politicians tend to be unable to understand the beliefs and traditions of Muslims during their diplomatic trainings, and that is why they cannot take effective decisions in dealing with the people of the MENA region.
In order to resolve such disparities and bridge gaps, this chapter seeks to primarily devise a contemporary and rational diplomatic training program for Western diplomats and politicians that deals pragmatically with the Arab Muslims in the MENA region, and ultimately assists Western representatives in overcoming the current existing dilemmas of international relations and apprehensions between the two sides. In this connection, this dissertation suggests two main pillars of the new diplomatic training program. The first pillar relies on the uniqueness and applicability of Islam; its successful historical and religious ramifications, and subsequently integrate these ramifications into the Western diplomatic training setting.

The second pillar relies on the application of Habermas’s intuitions in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of Habermas’s notions as tools of enlightenment for future Western diplomats and politicians. Additionally, the Habermasian intuitions will assist the dissertation to identify socio-political and religious patterns that underpin forms of knowing and guidelines. This is for the purpose of establishing stronger international relations based on the utilisation of Islamic thought and other Habermasian notions, including effective interaction, critical reflection, rationale and self-criticism, and mutual respect and pragmatic understanding.

This chapter pinpoints the ontological foundations of Islam which are collective in Islamic philosophies in order to accomplish the mission of devising a contemporary diplomatic training program for Western diplomats and politicians, and indicate how these philosophies have emerged in the contemporary socio-
This chapter argues and challenges the existing Western policies towards the MENA region and reflects on how Western diplomatic training programs have not helped diplomats and politicians in comprehending the demands of Arab Muslims and understanding the factors behind their support for political Islam; arguably, because the religion is not systematically elucidated to them.

The chapter also argues that neither existing Western trainings nor diplomatic programs have in-depth information about the ontological perceptive of Islam and its significance towards international relations and global unity. In this connection, it is essential to point out that the MENA region has been experiencing ongoing constructional socio-political and religious transformations over the last few decades. However, it can be argued that it is reasonably admissible for the MENA region to function normally in situations where the government and civil society both belong to the same religion and culture, but the problem begins when the Arab Muslims are placed under various forms of direct Western interventions and political influences that tend to be inapplicable and fail to respond to their demands. Nevertheless, it can be understood that the Western political system, foreign policies and responses towards the MENA region are being interrogated intensely. Therefore, to promote the development of states, peace, prosperity and mutual understanding, it is essential for Western diplomats and politicians to dynamically engage in effective diplomacies, network-orientated and state-centred dialogues. However, there may be several obstacles for these representatives while undertaking their training program. In this context, it can be argued that the
Western diplomatic training programs are designed to meet the diplomacy requirement of the Western region, nevertheless, Arab Muslims cannot find the grounds and benefits from such training programs, as they seem to not comprehend their policy requirements and cultural perceptive. Due to these demonstrations, it has become essential to implement dynamic changes into Western diplomatic training programs in order to enhance the fragile socio-political relations and resolutions towards the MENA region.

5.3 Diplomatic Training Program for Future Western Diplomats and Politicians

The political revolutions that have swept over the Arab nations in late 2010 unveiled some of the most challenging episodes for the despotic Arab regimes and their Western supporters. However, the consequences of the Arab uprisings have surprised many political observers, and subsequently dissatisfied other Arab and Western reformers and policymakers in terms of achieving its objectives. In fact, these consequences wrong-footed political figures and policymakers worldwide, in terms of the rise of sectarian wars, the reduction of the U.S. influence, and the use of social media (“Arab Spring: 10 unpredicted outcomes,” 2013). As a result, the MENA region is yet to avoid various forms of disfiguration and socio-political and religious dilemmas, including the internal and external state conflicts and religious violence committed by terrorists, extremists, sectarian divisions and Western intervention.

The economic bedrock of the entire MENA region is constantly subject to threats, and that can be attributed to the fragmentation affecting the ruling
authorities, destabilisation and the reduction of international investments. In addition, it can be understood that non-state actors, considered as symptoms of weakness of Arab leaderships are also posing threats to ruling regimes in the MENA region (Kaunert et al., 2014). In the context of Western diplomacy and international relations, several Western nations have tried multiple strategies over the past two decades to counter the devastating socio-political and religious state of affairs in the MENA region. However, it is understood that the notion of engaging the role of religion and religious affairs in existing Western diplomacy approaches is a challenging topic, and addressing it within the context of the EU’s international relations is believed to be inconsequential and timid (Mandaville & Silvestri, 2015).

In this context, the U.S. tried to modify its political system and sought to protect religious freedom within its foreign policies for stronger international relations; hence, it created what became known as the Office of International Religious Freedom. The main objectives of the office lie within endorsing religious freedom and considering it as a significant aspect of the U.S. foreign policies across the globe. Additionally, the office seeks to prevent religious persecution and discrimination around the world and strives to create religious programs in order to spread awareness of the issue at hand (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). On the other hand, the EU has accounted external links with religious perspectives, including the advocacy and protection of freedom of religion and belief systems (Mandaville & Silvestri, 2015). In this connection, it is important to explore the evolution and origin of the new prospectus, identify their future scopes
within the context of MENA region, and highlight the emphasis of how constructive engagement with Muslims and understanding political Islam can enhance and consolidate Arab-West international relations.

5.3.1 The Role of Islamic Notions

Noticeably, the religious parties have played various political roles in the politics of MENA region as well as international relations. However, there is a reasonable amount of assumptions in the Western setting that pinpoint Islam as the actual source of hardships for the Arabs and the entire world. Arguably, these assumptions emanate primarily from various sources that lack pragmatic knowledge about Islam, its historical success, tolerant teachings and the promotion of peace and education. For example, a poll that was conducted by BBC on British people found that the vast majority of them believe that Islam contradicts the very basics of Western values, including democracy, freedom of speech and justice, and that Islam lacks the agreement needed for matching these modern values.

Rashid (2016) refers such understanding to the lack of education about Islam in the West, and stresses that contemporary Western values are the same values that Islam has been advocating for since its early stages, including freedom, social justice and democratic values. For this reason, it become essential to illustrate the historical Islamic term of *shura* that can be translated into democracy according to modern standards. Additionally, the *shura* term has been mentioned in the Holy Qur’an, and cited in various Islamic narratives to encourage Muslims to advocate for mutual discussions and effective engagement among all community members. In this context, Sulaiman (1999) emphasises that *shura* is a
purely Islamic concept that rationally addresses various socio-political and religious relations, along with three other significant principles, including justice, equality and human dignity. Therefore, it can be stated that the Islamic political approaches need to be comprehended as an innovative approach that has set rules on democracy, freedom, respect, tolerance, constructive communication, education and justice from its very outset, at a time when the very same principles did not even exist in other civilisations across the globe.

These historical Islamic principles tend to reinforce the notion of progress, stability, effective engagement and the significance of faith in the hearts of Muslims around the world, who strongly believe that Islam can resolve various contemporary socio-political and religious dilemmas in progressive and peaceful manners. In this regard, it can be stated that Islam is a miles-achieving faith, and this can be contributed to the many existing elements of human affairs and the ability to accommodate and integrate other perspectives in its teachings. This can be observed through the assortment of Islamic books on fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence) and other related socio-political and religious matters in Islam, along with Islamic morality. In this connection, the dissertation suggests that Habermas’s Western insights and philosophies, as found in his theory of communicative action, can be adopted in the potential diplomatic training program in order to present the ideological aspect of morality in political Islam. This is pivotal when examining the terms of rational argumentation in communicative action, granted this latter requires differentiation between the validity, or not, of claims to be found in speeches (Bolton, 2005).
5.3.2 The Role of Habermas

The factors behind the formulation of Habermas’s theory can be also adopted in future Western training programs for diplomats and politicians in order to address political revolutions in the society and modify the economic status (Alway, 1995). Moreover, there is value in Western bodies grasping the core principle of Habermas’s critical theory, that is, the creation of a human society whereby freedoms and demands of members are respected, addressed and considered essential (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002). In support of this notion, Joll (2010) stresses that critical theory can be comprehended as an emancipatory revolution, since it effectively responds to the freedom and rationale of society, where the demands of all members of society are freely painstaking and well-maintained.

Other constructive definitions of critical theory need to be addressed in future Western training programs where the analysis of logical and informative affairs from a social theoretical perception is determined, and the cognitive and standard principles of visualisation are strongly protected, to a level of understanding that stresses the potential of religion within present-day living standards (MacKendrick, 2008). The flexibility of critical theory in reassessing various socio-political and religious aspects and rectifying forms of justification need to be highlighted to future Western diplomats and politicians in order to expand their political strategies related to contemporary dilemmas (MacKendrick, 2008). Most importantly, the significance of Habermas’s notions in his critical theory need to be demonstrated where such a demonstration can lead knowledge
seekers to the transformation of critique and rational thinking, and place them at the heart of critique (Freundlieb, et al., 2004).

The emerging Habermasian notions from his critical theory and his theory of communicative action as illustrated in chapter 4 can contribute positively towards shaping the appropriate approaches employed to strengthen the transformation of critique and rational thinking and provide rational clarifications. Subsequently, these interpretations of Habermas’s critical theory will present a unique way of knowing to future Western diplomats, that is, the promotion and employment of Habermas’s praxis for all knowledge seekers, whilst ascertaining the logical truth via interacting with the whole person, instead of relying merely on cognitive action or even inter-subjective knowledge (Lovat, 2004). This is particularly pivotal, especially when addressing the way Arab Muslims perceive their religion and politics. Therefore, it is important in future Western training programs to adopt the role of Habermas’s critical theory that endorses effective communication techniques along with effective engagement or praxis to reinforce contemporary socio-political learning platforms and develop engaging and constructive outcomes with others accordingly (Held, 1980).

Similarly, Habermas notions that differentiate between the following claims, comprehensible and well-organised speech acts can cause an objective claim towards being authentic, a standardising claim to righteousness, and a strong claim towards honesty (Bolton, 2005). These notions can guide the ideology of political Islam and present it in the potential diplomatic training program in a way that is comprehensible to Western diplomats and politicians. In addition to this,
Habermas states that there are different discourses that aim at addressing the above-mentioned claims. Arguably, these discourses can well-fit the future Western training program, especially when including in its folds a theoretical Habermasian discussion that focuses on truth, a moral-practical discourse that assesses standardising righteousness and aesthetic critique on sincerity; rational reflection and self-criticism.

By stating the core concept of Habermas’s intuitions, the potential diplomatic training program can formulate a two-stage approach of life-world and system. In this regard, Habermas highlights that the claims presented in communicative action are most often left unquestioned or are not criticised because they have taken place in the spheres of a shared life-world that remains undisputed. Furthermore, Habermas asserts that the life-world gives the public a commonly agreed upon background knowledge in which the communicative action can take place (Baxter, 1987). Therefore, the formulated Habermasian two-stage approach, the truth-focused theoretical discussion, a moral-practical discourse along with an extensive background knowledge can all contribute towards enhancing the future Western diplomatic training program. The result would be an understanding the pragmatic objectives of political Islam from a Western setting.

Such aspects can assist Western diplomats and politicians to better grasp the ontological foundations of Islam and its political agenda; hence, convey the message of Islamic thought into mainstream Western media, education and political institutions. For example, given that Islam is a way of life, at least to its
followers, it pragmatically includes legislative considerations of governmental and political dilemmas and perceive them as lively facts. This likewise implies that Islam does not acknowledge isolating any part of existence from the route of faith, and it disdains the consideration of illustrations by those individuals who rely exclusively on certain parts of Islamic teachings and reject the rest. That is why Islam urges Muslims to be committed to constructing up Allah’s request by way of actualising what he has declared within the Holy Qur’an and has been clarified through the prophet in the hadith. Hence, constructing up God’s request in this globe is viewed by many Muslims as an essential look of accommodating the love of God on earth, and ultimately achieve happiness, prosperity; rationality and peace. Consequently, Muslims find it challenging to separate Islam from legislative matters or governmental issues considering how these issues have been addressed in various interpretations of Islam.

Global secularism isolates the role of religion from matters occurring to society and nations, constraining it simply to the character circle and spots of affection to religious people. Nevertheless, Islam contains in its folds instructions for all components of life and requests its devotees to apply these instructions effectively for better societal outcomes. In light of the assertion, Habermas claims that a characteristic of the occidental society’s rationalisation is that the life-world has distinct lines of validity claims of speech acts. Therefore, a line has been drawn between three performative attitudes of communicative action. Additionally, these are objectifying attitudes towards the outer world that is based on events and circumstances, a standardising approach towards the social world
that involves a community and lastly an expressive attitude towards the inner world that is based on the subjectivity of members of society.

It is evident so far that Habermas’s concept of the life-world does not limit itself to the traditions of the culture of a specific group or community. In this connection, it can be stated that not only does the life-world provides a set of cultural values, but it also keeps the social actors in check so that they abide by the standards set by the society. This is crucial for Western diplomats and politicians to visualise and apply, particularly when it comes to dealing with political Islamic parties and understanding their visions and concerns, as such visualisation and applicability tend to enable the social actors to act as capable personalities by their environment (Baxter, 1987). Furthermore, the three Habermasian performative attitudes of communicative action can be integrated into the future diplomatic training program, along with the existing ontological perspectives of political Islam. Through this, Western socio-political actors can remain expressively engaged in various forms of dialogues, including the ability to objectify attitudes towards non-Western societies based on historical events and the current socio-political and religious circumstances of Arab Muslims in the MENA region and their perceptions on their life-world.

In this connection, Habermas has discussed three structural factors of the life-world which align with the following functions, including culture, society, and personality. Habermas states that if one looks at the level of culture, the cultural reproduction coincides with the interpretation activities that are shared by the members of the life-world. This interpretation is particularly significant for
Western diplomats and politicians as its implementation can lead to moving onto the next level, that is, social interaction, critical reflection and self-criticism. In this connection, Habermas argues that social interaction can be taken regarding a legitimate ordering of the mutual relations that have been created through the arrangement of actions carried out by the shared norms (Baxter, 1987).

Another level presented by Habermas is that of personality, in which he says that the process of socialisation tries to ascertain that personalities with communicative abilities are formed. This further proves Habermas’s point that culture, society, and personality are structural fragments of the rationalised life-world, and this illustration can be helpful for Western diplomats and politicians as it reveals the ramification of actions and demands. By discussing in detail the structural components of rationalised life-world in future diplomatic training programs, Habermas proves that by justifying the society, a difference can be created in a once unified life-world. Moreover, this Habermasian perspective sets guidelines for Western diplomats and politicians to grasp that the actions organised on the demands of media of money and power are not similar to the communicative action as their purpose is to gain successful organisation of the creation and transfer of goods by profit. In Habermas’s views, the system and life-world are not problematic in itself. Nevertheless, Habermas argues that the sphere of life-world should be gained by communicative action that is directed towards mutual understanding (Baxter, 1987).

If one explores Habermas’s earlier works, it can be seen that Habermas examined different concepts of knowledge in which he specified three aspects
which are analytical knowledge, hermeneutic knowledge and critical knowledge. These three aspects tend to formulate a model and reflect the concepts of Kantian perspectives that were based on science, aesthetics and morality (Terry, 1997). Significantly, these three concepts of knowledge can enrich the way knowledge is grasped in Western foreign policies as they tend to facilitate rational approaches of knowledge grasping, morality, rational reflection, historical analysis and pragmatic appraisals. These three areas of knowledge assist different types of human interests such as the empirical interests of people that can be served through the notions of science, which then comes under the field of analytical knowledge (Terry, 1997). Furthermore, the interests in different contexts such as historical and cultural context are catered by hermeneutically driven knowledge, and this can enhance the way Western diplomats and politicians receive their training and knowledge on public diplomacy.

The interest in the concept of freedom seems to be similar to the core elements of knowledge (Terry, 1997). This way of understanding such a concept is of high significance to Western representatives as it expands the circle of understanding the great value of freedom, particularly, regarding the freedom and democracy of Arab Muslims. In addition to the above-mentioned illustrations, it becomes evident that the three concepts of knowledge fall into the category of different discourses such as social sciences, natural sciences and psychology (Terry, 1997). In this connection, while examining the types of expertise, Habermas can provide Western diplomats and politicians with the key to analyse the education structures in which each type is said to be based on one of the
aspects of knowledge. For instance, analytical knowledge includes material related to education such as curriculum; hermeneutics comprises of educational methodologies such as *praxis*. Lastly, critical modes include concepts that are responsible for raising questions regarding policies (Terry, 1997).

If Habermas’s perspectives regarding knowledge and questionable knowledge are to be considered in future Western diplomatic training, then it becomes evident from the theories that Western diplomats and politicians will treat knowledge as a cumulative phenomenon that involves data being assimilated at every level which forms the basis for the next level of knowing. For instance, when analysing factual knowledge about Islam and its historical politics, the understanding of the concept is revealed which then becomes a topic that is to be critically examined (Terry, 1997). Importantly, the critical analysis of factual knowledge regarding political Islam can be related to what students, researchers, thinkers and policymakers are lead through in educational institutes and political dialogues. Also, if the methodology of delivering knowledge is to be examined in future Western training programs, then it can be seen that analytic element is predominant in the way teachers or lecturers share knowledge with students (Terry, 1997). As a result, the teaching methodologies are then categorised as the traditional approach, that is, used in knowledge.

On the last area of knowledge, which is a hermeneutic method, it can be seen that this method is part of the progressive philosophy (Terry, 1997). Arguably, these ways of knowing can construct unique and effective platforms for Western diplomatic training programs, particularly when such ways of knowing
are integrated into future diplomatic learning materials and other practical experiments.

Viewing the teaching methods regarding psychological developments that are achieved by every knowledge seeker, it can be seen that the process links back to Habermas’s critical theory of society and also to the concepts presented by the first generation of critical theorists from Frankfurt Institute for Social Research (Terry, 1997). Consequently, the process of acquiring knowledge, be it analytical or hermeneutic or critically oriented, reflects a learning process. Furthermore, it is in this cognitive process that a link is seen between Habermas’s concepts of knowledge and the change in his perceptions that occurred at a later stage due to his remodeling of the idea into communicative action and interaction (Terry, 1997). In this connection, a difference in the views of the earlier critical theorists and those of Habermas is evident from the way Habermas focused less on the psychological development of humans and more on the theories that had been implemented on the individuals of a society.

According to Habermas’s theory of communicative action, communication is essential aspect regarding solving societal issues (Bolton, 2005). In this context, while making the society the centre of attention, Habermas stresses upon the fact that without contact, the societal norms will prove to be fatal as every person goes through a different experience. Additionally, Habermas argues that the Marxist ideology needs to be modified to fit the needs of the society. In this connection, Habermas asserts that the Marxist school of thought excluded the human element while analysing the organisation. Furthermore, their evaluation of human evolution
regarding economic progress has been too narrow and confined. Consequently, Habermas claims that because individuals were not taken into consideration, the Marxist theory eliminated the concepts of revolution and class struggle (Bolton, 2005).

This perception of society takes away the freedom of its people; the freedom to voice their opinion and argue over essential matters. In this connection, the crisis that permeates in the modern society constitutes of different issues such as individual needs not being met and individuals being manipulated by their community (Jovchelovitch, 2001). In situations such as these, members of an organisation interact with one another which Habermas refers to as communicative action. As a result, the coming together of people and agreeing with each other’s opinions becomes an act of revolution which then leads to a change (Jovchelovitch, 2001). In this connection, Habermas states an affirmation to the agents of rationality, and their transition from the state of being unassuming at first, towards the state of becoming more unlikely (Rienstra & Hook, 2006).

Furthermore, Habermas bases his perception on the emphasised experience of the unconstrained, the ability to unify, with the addition of a mutually acceptable argumentative or debatable speech elements for a group of individuals that participate in an activity to overcome the prevailing subjective concepts (Rienstra & Hook, 2006).

In this context, these participants present an agreeable factor of conviction that turns into motivation based on rationality. This notion prompts the individuals to idealise a state where unification of an objective world with the intersubjectivity
of the world they live in (Rienstra & Hook, 2006). This Habermasian perception tends to reinforce the notion supporting effective interaction, pragmatic engagement in a constructive public sphere, where members of society can freely express their political views and debate their perceptions accordingly. Considering Western diplomacy, the important of this perception lies within its capacity to enlighten Western diplomats and politicians on the importance of conflicting observations and the way to address them constructively in order to develop a more inclusive understanding. Moreover, in his theory of communicative action, Habermas has provided a theoretical format based on an array of considerations, such as; the planning of public participation; agreeing on opinions by interacting with one another instead of using power on people; taking away the benefits of experts and elites; and replacing the approach used by technical experts with that of a reflective planner. Therefore, the concept of life-world and its associated affairs that exist within the ideology of political Islam can evolve positively, especially when integrated in accordance with Habermas’s viewpoints on culture, public participation, society, freedom, policies and personality in order to enhance the structural fragments of the rationalised society.

Life-world has a double meaning, such that on the one hand, there are contexts of culture, society, and personality within communicative action (Bolton, 2005). In this connection, the Habermasian contexts of culture, understanding society and personalities are significant elements that could contribute constructively towards the reduction of vested interests and ambiguous Western foreign policies, particularly when the MENA region is concerned. Moreover, it
can be stated that Western diplomats and politicians need to develop strategic engagement approaches that facilitate their participation in communicative acts to convey their gained knowledge onto others, and by doing so recreate the cultural experience while also developing a social identity.

Moving on to the importance of Habermas’s concept of social evolution in the political sphere, it is seen that the process takes a vital turn when sociologists argue about the action-oriented approach of the life-world which cannot account for all the issues of the modern world. In Habermas’s views, the process of rationalisation should be looked at not only as a distinction of the life-world, but rather as a communicative order that has been developed through symbols. Instead, rationalisation should be understood in regard to the material foundations of society as well. This would assist Western diplomacy in perceiving how other cultures view their societies and how foreign interventions can harm the pillar of their societies and cause further structural damage. Therefore, according to Habermas, the double meaning then shows that societies have to maintain transmission of traditional values, norms, and processes of socialisation. Also, they should be in control of their surroundings to achieve interventions (Jovchelovitch, 2001).

5.3.3 Western Approaches and Secularism

Western approaches, foreign policies, modernisation and globalisation have failed to integrate Western secularisation in the MENA region, particularly among the Arab masses. Accordingly, it is wise to indicate that Western foreign policies need to be revisited and integrated to involve the significant ramifications
of Habermas’s intuitions; the significance of understanding Islam along with its democratic principles and potentially apply these principles on non-Western societies. Additionally, when surveying the MENA region and pondering the outcomes of Western interventions and foreign policies, it is can be stated that the current available diplomatic training programs for Western diplomats and politicians have also been unsuccessful to a certain extent. For example, it can be seen that Western foreign policies have failed to adjust into the new conditions and accommodate the demands of the Arab Muslims in the MENA region during the Arab Spring. For instance, during the Arab Spring, the UK’s engagement strategies with the Arab masses were supposed to be developed and sustained. However, these strategies have been based on irrational assumptions derived from current British foreign policies that lacked pragmatism and ability to accept the desired reform by Arab Muslims.

This is especially important when considering the significant role of the UK and other Western political actors in the existed dilemmas facing MENA region. These dilemmas need to be confronted, particularly when it is clear that some Western governments have chosen to remain aloof, and till now on the habit of walking away from the economic, socio-political and religious instability in the region. Furthermore, it is crucial to point out that the MENA region is undergoing revolutionary transformations and unrest, and these transformations need pragmatic strategies exercised by Western counterparts in order to achieve constructive outcomes. However, the revolutionary transformations are cluttered and quite challenging to inform how the MENA region will further evolve, but one
thing is clear in this context, that is, Arabs and Western policymakers must come
together and prepare to take account of the new structures of power and demands,
and most importantly address them effectively. Furthermore, Western diplomats
and politicians must understand that the MENA region is a challenging region in
terms of geography, and it is a complex undertaking as it expenses into three
largest continents, Asia, Africa and Europe. This understanding is especially
important to tackle the current socio-political crisis, including the rise of terrorism
and extremism, the lack of security and the refugee crisis that have been sweeping
Europe and other parts of the world since the beginning of the Arab Spring in late
2010.

5.3.4 Islamic Socio-Political Traits and Western Interests in the MENA
Region
In the Islamic context, the ascent of socio-political Islamic traits in diverse
components of international relations tend to have gone towards opposing Western
mastery and manipulation over Muslim domains, societies, cultures and
organisations. However, it is important to clarify that Islamic trends are in fact
against the outcomes of the manipulative Western foreign policies and
interventions in the MENA region; the usurpation of their socio-political and
religious rights by despotic Arab regimes that are supported by the West, and the
denigration of Islam as frequently occurs within mainstream Western media
(Eickelman & Piscatori, 1996). Moreover, it is far pressing for Western diplomats
and politicians to acknowledge whether or not Islam is a solid energy, regardless
of whether the current dilemmas amongst Arab Muslims and the West are
inescapable, and whether or not the alleged historical Islamic human development along with Islamic revivalism represent a tenable hazard to the Western world. Additionally, as the emergence of political and stable Islam began to take place post the Arab Spring, it is apparent that a fundamentalist development has risen with the unique political challenge of changing the Muslim social and political orders. This is a response to the Western interventions and foreign policies towards Arab Muslim societies, the decay of energy and the lack of idealism; powerless Islamic societies, lack of education and high rates joblessness, particularly among youth and qualified graduates.

The absence of engaging political institutions, tyrant regimes and nonappearance of vote primarily based systems are considered as further reasons for the emergence of fundamentalism and extremism in the MENA region. However, Arab Muslims and Western societies can effectively create a rewarding relationship to strengthen their fragile international relations. In this connection, it can be stated that such relationship would not be introduced based on thoughts of social prevalence or contention, however, as an alternative to shared mutual respect and receptiveness to socio-political and religious variance. Furthermore, Muslims and Westerners can gain from every different aspect in their socio-political and religious understandings and take part in the quest for rational societies and self-criticism.

Dating back to history, the year 1979 is perceived to be a turning point in relation to Islam and international relations as well. During that period of time, the post-colonial period of secularism and socialism that reigned over the Muslim
world concluded, and a new period was introduced, in which the forces of Islam gained momentum. In this regard, the Iranian Revolution has introduced forms of Islamic and criminal law within its transformation, and yielded in the Iranian policies a cocktail of socio-political and religious events that had Islamic roots on international relations. This has instilled fear among policymakers, especially when considering the geo-political ramifications in the MENA region; the Western world, and the implications of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980 (Parvaz, 2014).

The rise of religion and its influence present complicated issues and challenges that strongly confront Western interest and foreign policies in the MENA. For example, Burchill (2015) believes that the U.S. has frequently supported despotic regimes and tyranny in the MENA region because these regimes tend to maintain stability in the region and support Western counter-terrorism strategies. On the other hand, Islamic parties such as those in Iran, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip tend to be much worse for Western interests. Therefore, this lack of religious understanding about Islam among Westerners can be attributed to various modern-day practices and traditions in the West, in which the role of religion in life is declining in many Western nations, including Britain and Australia (Sheridan, 2017). Therefore, it can be stated that although the preference for the U.S. and other Western policymakers is not to involve the role of religions while setting up international relations, yet these policymakers fail to visualise that their practised internal policies that avoid the involvement of religion are unlikely to succeed. This is, especially the case when
applied to Arab Muslims in the MENA region. For this reason, Western nations need to accept a wider role for religious institutions in the MENA region.

Western governments are now faced with confusion concerning the approaches they need to utilise in order to address socio-political matters from Islamic perspectives. This illustration is crucial as Western governments play an influential role that impacts their political initiatives and decision making towards Arab nations. For this reason, this dilemma of Western political uncertainty has been crippling the Arab nations over the last three decades. On the other hand, an array of reports and studies have proven that Islamic resurgence in recent decades has developed rapidly into several trends, ranging from democratic, militant, revolutionary and liberal trends (Beaumont, 2011); hence, to give this religious resurgence a blind eye by Western diplomats and politicians would be considered as an act of absurdity and blindness. In this connection, it is fruitful if not necessary to point out that the current Western foreign policies and diplomatic training programs have not helped Western diplomats and politicians to understand what the Arab people demand and why they support reforms through Islamic ontologies. Additionally, neither Western training nor diplomatic programs have in-depth information about the Islamic anthology and that can be contributed to the utilisation of philosophical foundations in international relations, and overseeing ontological grounds (Alruwaih, 2014).

Equally important is the need for Western diplomats and politicians to comprehend that Islam is an all-encompassing religion in all aspects of life, including politics, democracy, leadership and religion. For example, even though
Prophet Moses and Prophet Jesus (peace be upon them) were both religious leaders without ruling a state according to Islamic teachings, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), on the other hand, did found a polity and served as a political leader. Furthermore, this polity was one in which he reflected and successfully applied the Islamic laws on all segments of societal affairs (Pennell, 2003).

Additionally, in the Holy Qur’an, there are clear, direct textual commands ranging from the implementation of penalties for minor offences such as theft and disobedience to parents, to specific rules on international relations that strongly acknowledge the code of comprehensiveness and rationality (Abdullah, 2017). This is one of the many reasons why Muslims across the globe, and followers of Islam generally, claim that the Holy Qur’an is their constitution, and seek to apply its teaching to the constitution of their lifestyles. Indeed, the Holy Qur’an contains specific commands associated with various life matters, including and not limited to trade, international relations, politics, welfare, tolerance and war affairs (Abdullah, 2017). However, it can be argued that some Western perspectives remain pessimistic and indicate that Islam plays an anti-democratic role in life. In this context, it is important to explore the theoretical approaches related to international politics that have emerged from various Islamic concepts, including the concept of sovereignty, state and international relations, and convey the message of such concepts to the Western world. This can contribute towards creating a transparent atmosphere of understanding the political Islamic trends, and enhancing the pragmatic knowledge of Western diplomats and politicians about them.
From a theoretical Islamic perspective, the state is not deemed as a system of sovereigns, it is rather considered as a community of believers, and called the indivisible Muslim ummah to bind as one according to the commands of Allah (SWT), who is sovereign and the founder of all legislations in the form of the Holy Qur’an (Siddiqi, 2004). Similarly, when considering Habermas’s concept of a public sphere, it should be noted that Habermas does not consider the State to be independent. Instead, he regards the State as a non-responsive agent because it does not deal with the interests of its people (Terry, 1997). In this connection, Habermas voices his concerns and suggests that the state and the citizens need to have a channel of communication to share their interests and concerns regarding essential matters. Additionally, the intended channel of communication created by the state and the citizens are referred to as the public sphere. Therefore, the public sphere includes a range of informal associations and also receives coverage by the mass media. In addition, within the public sphere, members of a society are allowed to bring up any social concern which is then formally considered in the political system (Terry, 1997).

The shared ontological foundation of Islamic international relations presents rich Islamic approaches, particularly from the Holy Qur’an and the hadith that provide Muslims with the foundational knowledge related to various historical and contemporary interpretations. In this regards, the subject of international relations has received a great deal of concentration in the Islamic ontology, and is translated in Arabic into the term Mu‘amalat, and subsequently translated as Siyar, according to Islamic international law, which developed greatly into a significant
branch of Islamic law in the second half of the 2nd century. Considering the positive ramifications of such two terms, it is of great value to clarify these two concepts when training Western diplomats and politicians as a wider vision of comprehension and critical reflection may take place and lead to fruitful outcomes. In this regard, the concept of Siyar takes into account the mutual and exchanged dialogues between Muslims and non-Muslims in order to create better communication skills and potentially stronger relations (Bsoul, 2007). These theoretical Islamic approaches tend to define many forms of Islamic dealings, including domestic and international relations.

Although the Holy Qur’an is older than 1400 years old, its basic concepts, applicability and traditionalism bear resemblance with contemporary issues, including diplomacy and international relations. Additionally, as Islamic rules are considered entirely social, political and economic to Muslims, the Holy Qur’an and the hadith present constructive strategies to better understand life undertakings, including a wide range of socio-political and religious affairs (Siddiqi, 2004). To emphasise further, Islam concentrates on a dynastic concept of power, knowledge of practical legal ruling, gives opportunities to Muslims to pursue their lives in deemed legal manners according to the law of country in which they live in; allows for the fluid, ambiguous, and hierarchical concepts; and welcomes diversity of opinions (Abdalla, 2013). Conversely, Abdalla (2013) stresses that fear and suspicion get conjured swiftly in the heart for Westerners when they hear the term shari’a, and that is largely due to linking it to unforgiving
penal laws and assumption surrounding its applicability with democratic principles and human rights.

The term ‘shari’a is widely misinterpreted among Westerners along with its real meaning. Hence, it is important to illustrate that the term shari’a means path or road to a safe place or a way to achieve salvation in the afterlife (Abdalla, 2013). So the question whether or not religion should play a role in governance should be answered with a yes, especially when applied on Islamic societies. Conversely, it can be argued that one of the biggest concerns for Arab Muslims concerning secular Western diplomats and politicians is the lack of faith in Global Justice in general. This is where the Islamic system comes in very strongly for Muslims, as Islamic teaching and traditions have always endeavoured to spread moderation and justice across the world (Ahlul Bayt Digital, n.d.).

5.3.5 Islamic Affairs

Islam and the Islamic laws have permeated almost all economic, political, social, human rights, democracy and personal issues. Hence, it can be stated that the truth is that Islam when it is taken into consideration in pragmatic manners may provide socio-political and economic platforms that can be more effective than what is offered elsewhere. Additionally, the lack of corruption in the authentic Islamic policies and its straightforward functionaries make political Islamic notions legitimate and transparent, especially when compared against the policies of autocratic Arab regimes. In this context, the net result is that whether peaceful or not, militant or orthodox, liberal or tolerant, Islam and its politics have retained their positions in dominance over most of the Islamic world. This the reality on the
ground that Western diplomats, politicians, policy and decision makers may rationally visualise, comprehend and potentially implement within their future policies; international relations strategies and diplomatic trainings.

It should also be gathered that the teachings of Islam are not limited to Muslims only, but they are a systematic code of life and an interplay of wishful thinking; attributes, devotional discussions, faith, and true beliefs. In this context, the Holy Qur’an illustrates that the teachings of Islam and the guidance of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are not exclusive to Muslims only, but sent to the whole world. For example, Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Qur’an: “We have sent you as a mercy for all the worlds.” (Quran 21:107). Additionally, away from deliberate or imprudent misinterpretations, Islam promotes tolerance, knowledge seeking, understanding and diversity and this can be seen through another verse of the Holy Qur’an in which Allah (SWT) says: “O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.” (Quran 49:13). In another verse, Allah (SWT) says: "And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge." (Quran 30:22). Considering the noble messages of the Holy Qur’an, it can be stated that fear and suspicion from the Western side towards the teachings of Islam should not occur. Rather, the concentration on tolerance and flexibility to learn the ultimate constructive objectives of Islam is
greatly needed, including further enlightenment on various Islamic aspects, including faith, justice, mutual respect, broadmindedness, education and diversity.

One of the best examples of successful Islamic policies is the developing economies of countries where Islamic principles of finance are adhered to. On the international arena, the Islamic finance climbs high as several financial institutions and Western banks have taken principles of Islamic finance, either as a part of their services or separately (Sergie, 2014). This is one field where Western governing bodies are willing to implement and learn from Islamic concepts and practices in order to achieve rewarding financial objectives, especially in the U.S. and Europe. In the Muslim setting, it can be understood that the increased tendency of Muslims towards Islamic finances is due to their inclination to conduct finance affairs according to Islamic codes. On the other hand, Western nations, including Britain have made some changes to their financial regulations after 11 September 2011, in which they actively stimulated changes in law and made amendments to follow forms of Islamic financial guidelines (Sergie, 2014). Such a constructive example is one of the many that can be elucidated beneficially to Western diplomats and politicians during their diplomatic preparation programs in order to build positive perception about the Islamic contributions towards society, prosperity and culture.

Indeed, there is a wealth of studies devoted to research of Islam within international relations, and the debate has grown exponentially over the years. In this regard, it is suggested that Islam, as many researchers claim, is a comprehensive socio-political, foreign, and economic policy system that has all the necessary ingredients to thrive (Siddiqi, 2004). However, when pondering the
dealings of Islamic nations, it can be stated that the some of these nations, irrespective of the situation, pursue their objective of issues regardless to being typically Islamic or not. These countries do so with complete conformity in compliance with the existing system related to the internationally accepted diplomacy and international law. However, it can be argued that in Muslim nations where the application of true Islamic teachings is well-observed and practised, it is evident that the people of these nations stand by their accepted Islamic guidelines among the vast majority of community members. This comprehension tends to provide perceptions that Islam and political Islam have influential factors to play in the world politics; hence, it is strongly recommended that Western diplomats and politicians study these factors constructively to create atmospheres of effective interaction, comprehensive understanding, mutual respect and the willingness to adopt contemporary Non-Western principles. In addition, this can enhance the rationale behind acquiring effective knowledge in order to acknowledge the interests and freedoms of people, and most critically, transition these interests via rational and reflective methodologies.

5.3.6 Habermasian Notions and Theoretical Islamic Ontologies

Thus far, it is clear that the dissertation has sought to devise a new training program for Western diplomats and politicians based on various Habermasian notions along with theoretical Islamic ontologies for creating platforms of mutual understanding and potentially enhancing Arab-West international relations. However, the sad reality is that controversies and hatred do exist in the Western world regarding political Islam. For example, Ali (2017) stresses that it is crucial
for Western nations, including the U.S. to counter the political ideologies of Islam as they are threatening and harmful strategies towards the values of Western societies. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the reason for people reaching for such a conclusion lies within the lack of knowledge about the religion of Islam and its Sunnah, or even personal hatred in some cases. However, these controversies tend to strengthen the core value of this dissertation to spread platforms of rationality and critical reflection in order to effectively enlighten and train Western diplomats and politicians in light of Islamic guidelines on international relations. This perception has the potential to facilitate a better understanding of the core value of Islamic recommendations. Conversely, it can be stated that the current rules in Muslim societies need to be modified and declared compatible with authentic Islam, and supported via influential Western nations. This is of high importance as it would set a valid example for Western diplomats and politicians to learn from, and increase their pragmatic knowledge about Islam and its political objectives as well.

Indeed, the new generation of Western diplomats and politicians needs to understand Islam for grounding political actions and conduct theoretical discussions in the public sphere, including media platforms and educational institutions that pay attention to the theological, socio-political elements and other advantages that Islam and political Islam can constructively offer to society and culture. Additionally, political Islamic notions can be addressed and integrated in the Western setting via the application of Habermas’s analytical and theoretical notions that enable Western diplomats and politicians to realise how their
perceptions about Islam differed when positively introduced to its tolerant
historical and contemporary teachings. Moreover, Western diplomats and
politicians need to get accustomed to the fact that by understanding the true
objectives of Islam and Islamic rules, many socio-political and religious dilemmas
of international relations towards the Arab Muslims in the MENA region can be
illustrated, improved, and successfully dealt with.

This understanding can be further enhanced by introducing educational
courses to Western diplomats and politicians that pragmatically and intellectually
introduce comprehensive studies of various Quranic verses and hadiths related to
international dealings. By following this approach, prejudices, vested interests and
forms of manipulation involved in guiding Western diplomats and politicians can
be decreased. Therefore, this will help in achieving cohesive and considerate
interpretations of the way Arab Muslims perceive Islam and its politics as a system
and way of life; hence, conveying the perceptions of Arab Muslims to the Western
public through mainstream media; educational and political institutions.

Towards consolidated Arab-West international relations, the gaps in
current Western diplomatic training programs, along with existing hindrances in
inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial discussions towards Arab Muslims
have been identified. In this regard, considering the current outcomes of the socio-
political and religious state of affairs in the MENA regions along with the
reactions of Western governments towards them, including military actions, it can
be argued that the Western diplomatic training programs seem to lack planning and
pragmatic initiatives for harmonising the chaotic state of the Arab nations. In this
context, attention should be directed towards the way Habermas has dealt with the political influences of the German government in light of the Nazi leadership. To demonstrate further, the impact of the German government on its citizens has been prevalent in the works of Habermas (Terry, 1997). Additionally, Habermas could not overlook the brutal attitudes of Nazi leadership towards the German citizens and his views regarding such an oppressive rule can be observed in his writings (Terry, 1997).

Habermas was unable to understand why such a large population would find way to justify the actions of tyrant rulers and accept the atrocities that had been brought down on them (Terry, 1997). Therefore, Habermas’s notions of freedom and rationality seem to have risen out of the sorrows that he had seen throughout his childhood and left a reflective impact on his essence. Considering this, Habermas asserts in his concept of rationality that the learning process of any society relies on the people who make up that society, therefore, these processes should be of utmost importance so that any regression can be avoided from taking place in a society or a community (Terry, 1997). This notion is of crucial significance to Western diplomats and politicians, especially when addressing the societies of Arab Muslims and the Arab ruling bodies as such a notion tends to define the true objectives of free rational society and lead to freedom.

Aside from the cognitive processes that play a crucial role in the development of a society, Habermas directs attention towards the regeneration of the social sphere in light of the struggles that are present between the social systems and the life-world, in which people live out their days. In this connection,
Habermas asserts that the function of the system is to colonise the life-world (Terry, 1997). He views language as a means to gaining a rational consensus which he considers to be the fundamental mode of social interaction. In addition to this, Habermas also points that by aiming for social interaction, members of a society can avoid putting an end to any colonisation from taking place within any system (Terry, 1997). Thus, it is crucial to note that Habermas has drawn his communicative action theory from the works of Austin and Searle, both of them had been influenced by Wittgenstein. As a result of this, Habermas has been facing complications as intellectuals are unable to differentiate between his theories of communicative action and the ideas based on sphere along with those that are focused on the notions of language (Terry, 1997). On the other hand, Habermas believes that if topics based on the notions of universalism are to be brought forward, then they should be supported by arguments, facts and figures that can make their existence understandable (Terry, 1997).

By providing arguments to support such assumptions, Habermas believes that by critically analysing such a concept, the authenticity can be evaluated. In this connection, it should be kept in mind that the apprehension of any subject matter is a fundamental component of language (Terry, 1997). Furthermore, Habermas asserts that the truth aspect can be judged by analysing the linguistic expressions of the speaker. Also, the way people utilise linguistic patterns for commencing communicative action can show the truthfulness in their arguments (Terry, 1997). These Habermasian notions can be integrated into the future Western diplomatic training program in order to consider placing Western foreign
policies towards the MENA region under scrutiny of authenticity, rational ramifications and communicative interaction. It should be noted that when initiating a communicative interaction, the participants should ensure that they all refer to the same level of language. By doing so, they can all refer to facts and figures in order to argue on any subject so that every individual is familiar with the topic of discussion and is prepared to comment on it with true intentions and sufficient knowledge (Terry, 1997).

Habermas asserts that people should not use illogical statements to prove themselves right, nor should people try to force people or persuade them into accepting the comments uttered during any debate (Terry, 1997). On the contrary, Habermas prefers being rational over everything and urges people to be logical when asked to take part in any political debate so that the debate reaches a conclusion and in doing so presents a solution to important socio-political matters (Terry, 1997). In addition, Habermas believes that if everyone used fair means when taking part in any argument and provided sufficient proof for every case. Only then an ideal speech situation can be achieved and that is the whole point behind his theory (Terry, 1997). In pragmatic terms, if these Habermasian intuitions were to be applied on future Arab-West international relations and diplomatic dialogues, existing disagreements and arguments may have the opportunity to become rational demands that lead to a better understanding of the issue at hand.

Conversely, it can be argued that Western diplomats and politicians tend to be trained from academic and philosophical perspectives that provide insights on
various trends in the political world according to Western perceptions, but they are not necessarily devised according to ontological manners to rationally understand society, religion; maintain peace and harmony among nations. For example, the UK, one of the most powerful players in the politics of the MENA region is arguably lacking a strategic planner in its diplomatic training programs for addressing the religious perspectives and demands of Arab Muslims, which is gradually weakening the harmony in the MENA region. This is especially important given the current socio-political and religious situation of the Arab nations, and the presence of exigencies to address such situations for the purpose of maintaining agreement and upholding harmonious future for Arab-West international relations.

The U.K. has recently recognised the significance contributions of faithful groups in enhancing schemes and future development. Consequently, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) established the Faith Partnership Principles in 2012, as a way of acknowledgement towards the contributions made by faith-based groups (Mandaville & Silvestri, 2015). In this connection, it can be argued that one of the main reasons the Western diplomatic programs have fallen back can be attributed to the lack of pragmatic understanding of the cause of discontent among Arab nations towards Western governments. In this regard, it is crucial to point out that one of the main future agendas for Western diplomatic training programs should be the compulsory facilitation of learning platforms for Western diplomats and politicians for enhancing their knowledge about the multinational setting of Islamic policies, interest and
economics involved; hence, dedicating themselves to learn about the significant role of religion and Islamic culture to Arab Muslims in the MENA region.

It is pivotal that Western diplomatic trainings possess instructions that are fruitful for setting up international relations, but these instructions cannot be applied on all cultures and circumstances, including the culture of Arab Muslims. Additionally, the future training programs must comprise of constructive elements which are in embryo of Western diplomatic training programs already. Such elements include encouraging Western trainees to grapple with constructive concepts such as rationality and critical reflection for understanding contemporary socio-political and religious affairs of Arab Muslim nations or states. Furthermore, future training programs need to also focus on addressing the nature of contemporary diplomacy in order to provide insights into the interpenetration of public sphere as well as formal diplomacy. This will have the potential to assist Western diplomats and politicians to compare their requirements and policies with the international policies and strategies of development required by Arab Muslims.

Diplomatic trainees must be informed about the nature of public diplomacy according to its current context of Arab Muslims and Islamic notions, including objectives, strategies, targets, tools, and principles. This may provide a comprehensive knowledge regarding the public diplomacy to all Western diplomats and politicians, promote the national interest of Western nations in transparent manners, and connect Western representatives with non-Western societies at a progressive international level. Furthermore, the future devised training program and the content of its courses need to be focused on the realities
of diplomacy and the current state of affairs in the MENA region, instead of irrelevant commercial business experience and vested interests. This may assist Western diplomats and politicians in comprehending the cross-section of the constituencies engaged in the civil society organisations, foreign ministries, minority groups, business and banking; locally engaged rational staff, and cultural and religious experts.

This program is also of significance in order to prepare Western diplomats and politicians to effectively work with civil society organisations in the MENA region, public figures; government bodies, opposition, and understand their agenda and socio-political and religious visions. Such approaches could assist states significantly and encourage them to interact with educational programs internationally along with development agencies. Thus, the potential of the devised diplomatic training program must include a module on cultural communication, and studies about Islam and its historical ramifications; region, and country, each focusing on particular socio-political, cultural or religious matters. In this way, the culture of Arab Muslims, religion, and the MENA region will be discussed separately and so the issues of the Arab Muslims will be solved separately according to their requirements and suitability. In this connection, Western diplomats and politicians may possess neutral thinking skills and rational reflection and provide equal opportunities to Arab Muslims in the MENA region, and convey their pragmatic understanding of the issue at hand, according to various applicable Habermasian interpretations.
The task to accomplish such an outcome is not a simple project, but rather a complex undertaking that requires forms of self-criticism, pragmatic discussion, effective engagement; communication, and most importantly, figuring out the shortcomings of the current approaches of Western foreign policies towards the MENA region. In this context, Mandaville and Silvestri (2015) provide illustrations on how Western initiatives, including the European Parliament Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance need to step up further. Both authors tend to simply describe the group as a discussion gateway for like-minded individuals, without real influence on European policies. For this reason, it can be stated that there is an exigency in the Western setting to possess a comprehensive socio-political and religious program that can be carried out rationally by well-trained and qualified Western diplomats and politicians during their preparation periods to successfully overcome barriers of misunderstandings and vested interests towards improved Arab-West international relations. The intended program must comprehensively indicate that the Islamic laws have yielded fruitful results in various stages in the last fourteen centuries, and refer to successful Islamic eras, including the Arab-Islamic civilisation of Al-Andalus, which can be provided as a constructive example.

Hence, there should not be reservations that questions the need for historical and contemporary Islamic teachings to be implemented in the Western diplomatic training programs, to better enhance Arab-West international relations. Moreover, it is pivotal for Western representatives to undertake a holistic approach towards applicable Islamic teachings and comprehend issues at hand without
taking discussed topics or religious texts out of context. This way of comprehension is clearly illustrated in the Holy Qur’an in order to develop a better understanding of all discussed topics. For example, Allah (SWT) says: “Then is it only a part of the Book that ye believe in, and do you reject the rest? but what is the reward for those among you who behave like this but disgrace in this life? - and on the Day of Judgment they shall be consigned to the most grievous penalty. For God is not unmindful of what ye do.” (Qur’an 2:85). This understanding is particularly important since Islam is seen, at least to its followers as a religion of peace, rationale, pragmatism and relies on rules that have set harmony in most chaotic situations, in both past and present.

It is also important for Western representatives to understand that Islam is a religion that is greatly concerned with the protection of lives and has always encouraged receiving and welcoming foreign delegations, and setting up scopes of international relations and trade (Arbil, 2012). Hence, it can be stated that the Islamic teachings tend to look at all the aspects associated with any dilemma and do not only rely on the foundation of that matter, but rather provide a full script model to immunising the global solutions and form harmony in international relations. Therefore, numerous aspects of Western diplomatic training programs should be integrated in light of the fruitful teachings and traditions of Islam that can eliminate misinterpretations. For example, a model of classical Islamic doctrine should be represented and shown to Western representatives, and how it can be beneficial in dealing with modern-day dilemmas, and contemporary Muslim societies. This may provide opportunities that asset Western diplomats and
politicians in analysing all aspects of Islamic law, find whether or not implementations of such laws or understandings are useful for the country they deal with in terms of economy and international relations.

Contemporary Western diplomats and politicians also need to be taught ways of guiding governments in the MENA region by utilising rational, thoughtful and harmonious approaches, particularly when witnessing the current chaotic state of affairs in the entire Arab world. Their main objective should be restoring rationality, harmony, stability, and establishing relations that are valued and respected within the context of Arab Muslims. By the same token, another potential and important objective of Western diplomatic training programs lies within not only making future diplomats and politicians understand international relations and foreign policies, but simultaneously learn how to form rational societies, protect lives and deal with the situations for immunising the harmonious atmosphere in the best possible methods. In this context, it can be stated that the teachings of Islamic laws, by far, have one of the most applicable record for this. Therefore, Islamic teachings that are concerned with global relations need to be discussed and applied, while Western diplomats and politicians obtain their initial trainings.

The study of successful Islamic civilisations, including the Arab-Islamic civilisation of Al-Andalus and present-day countries where constructive Islamic rules are adhered to should be reinforced when training Western diplomats and politicians. This is in addition to addressing the verses of the Holy Qur’an, the available hadiths and studies that have been previously applied on successful
Muslim countries in transparent and objective manners. Consequently, the intended study of Islamic teachings related to international relations may provide Western diplomats and politicians with the clarity of thought needed and the opportunities required to decide what suits most to enhance Arab-West international relations. In this context, leading Western nations, including Australia, Canada, the UK and the U.S. should aim at devising training programs for Western diplomats and politicians along with foreign diplomats with sights on gaining the professional experience on the political, cultural and religious aspects and diplomacy implemented. These nations and others should also direct their efforts to making the career of diplomats and politicians strongly guided by various effective Habermasian intuitions, including rational reflection, self-criticism and effective interaction with wider communities.

Western diplomats and politicians need to be able to mutually negotiate various perceptions, evaluate and identify the common grounds of the participants in order to reach constructive conclusions. In such programs, people or the participants come from different parts of the World, obtaining various socio-political and religious interpretations from their homelands. Additionally, Western nations must be prepared to conduct socio-political and religious seminars or workshops that invite influential and religious figures, government bodies, high ranking staff and ministries of different Arab countries to come together and take part and discuss their political foundations, agenda and strategies in transparent manners. In this way, the participants may get the opportunities to discuss their plans, businesses, and future leadership guidelines and interest among Western
representatives. This can lead the host nations and foreign participants to gain a strong impression and critically reflect on constitutional law, international politics, federalism, strategies and future cooperation with other countries.

This approach may guide all nations participating to better understand what strategies will be highly beneficial for their countries in order to stay and gain strong support internationally. A special attention should be also paid to political Islamic parties throughout the MENA region that pursue the application of various Islamic socio-political, religious and financial approaches, particularly when dealing with current affairs and international relations. As a result, a transparent understanding of various political visions could be created, discussed, or even disputed for the betterment of all participant nations. Hence, the participants would train to establish their knowledge and practice of bilateral relations with other countries and develop international socio-political, economic, peacekeeping policies. The enhancement of human rights, effective interaction, self-criticism and protection policies designed to make their countries stronger at the international level could be the result. On the other hand, Arab-Muslim politicians and diplomats in the MENA region need to also get similar trainings of politics and diplomacy and invite Western representatives to share and discuss their visions for the region.

For training of Western diplomats and politicians and for enhancing their understanding about Islam and its influential roles among Arab Muslims in the MENA region, it is crucial that the studied materials and activities of the diplomatic training programs are of very high-level and relevance to modern-day
affairs, particularly those occurring within Arab nations. For example, broadcasting documentaries related to common biased interpretations against Islam shall be available for Western trainees and questions posed for them to reflect their opinions critically and rationally. This will be helpful in understanding the psychological and perceptual levels of understanding of all trainees. Additionally, a pre-psychological of theology test should be the part of the assessment or as the eligibility criteria which would help in screening the skills required to become a strong and a positive diplomat who possesses rational levels of critique and self-reflection.

This testing is particularly important in order to formulate balanced activities and develop certain characteristics among trainees such as rationality, flexibility; humbleness, kindness towards others; logical and critical thinking, without any prejudices involved. This may create among trainees a sense of controlling anger and aggression, effective engagement, respect for other people, their religions and thoughts, etc. This is because activity based learning is much more useful and pragmatic on this level as compared to lecture system or theories. In this connection, the activities implemented shall aim at gaining the knowledge of major aspects of Islam and its politics as well as the cultural variations of different Arab countries and willingness to openly learn about the historical and contemporary Islamic ontology. These aspects should be considered in the content of future Western training programs as they may asset Western diplomats and politicians in understanding the major issues facing the MENA region and
determining the common aspects in which the establishment of pragmatic international relations can be accomplished.

Future Western diplomatic training programs should also involve interviews with rational Arab Muslim thinkers along with influential religious figures to help understand their visions and respond to their demands in rational manners. In this connection, the future socio-economic and religious status of the MENA region should be introduced and discussed in the future training program by highly educated trainers who possess diverse expertise and understanding of the Islamic thought and its progressive history. In addition, trainers of diplomatic programs should be qualified and equipped with Islamic knowledge in order to lead the transformation of Western diplomacy and political system. Importantly, trainers of Western diplomatic training programs should at least spend a sufficient amount of time, living alongside rational Arab Muslims and getting to know and understand their culture and perceptions. In this way, Western trainers will have the ability to convey their understanding and practical experiences to future Western diplomats and politicians; clarify misconceptions and eliminate prejudices.

Future training programs should also contain a pre-test and post-test to measure the perceptual changes in the way Western diplomats and politicians perceive Islam, political Islam, and the MENA region in order to improve their experiences as well as their knowledge acquisition. Therefore, it becomes essential to implement changes into the current Western diplomatic training programs, and
these should be altered in ways that respond to the rational demands of Arab Muslims.

It is also indispensable that Western diplomats and politicians must undertake a practical part in the training to understand what strategies may be helpful to further develop the MENA region, gain the support of masses and stand firmly as an entity when challenged at international level through media or political forums. Therefore, one of the primary factors in the potential training program is to invite Arab Muslims thinkers and foreign diplomats to gain the professional experience on the political aspects and diplomacy of the West towards their region. This may assist political representatives in exchanging visions, political ideologies and transforming their political objectives in ways that preserve dignity, political reform; highlight the major issues in the region and identify ways to bring constructive changes. Conversely, it is pivotal for the representatives of Arab Muslims to understand Islam and its teachings thoroughly when taking part in Western democratic training programs. They must discuss their views about constitutional law, international politics, and federalism to Western representatives and gain insight into the working structures and procedures of the Western political, business, and media spheres, ones which can be rationally applied to Arab Muslims by means of amending them to fit their religious beliefs and imperatives.

Finally, in order to accomplish human security and constructive interaction on the planet, the universal group needs an approach grounded in social sympathy, multilateralism, and comprehensive agreement about interests, qualities, and
expectations that are partly taken in the global organisation. By calling for deferential exchange and shared engagement, we can change an inheritance of agony, create a profound knowledge, practical comprehension of present open doors and perils, and a persisting reason for social justice; peace, engagement and cohesive Arab-West international relations. It is then at that point in time when Western envoys to the Arab world come to understand Islam, its politics and laws heartedly, and learn realistically from one of the best constitutions that has ever been created to serve humanity.

5.4 Summary

To recap, strengthening future Arab-West international relations, and devising a contemporary and rational diplomatic training program for Western diplomats and politicians can be considered as one of the vital subjects in international relations and public diplomacy due to the current fragile state of affairs in the MENA region. Additionally, despite the fact that there is a boundless demand for cohesive and rational Western inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial relations with the Arab nations, the depth and pragmatism of academic research in the field of international relations and education is still inadequate.

Regarding the future diplomatic training program for Western diplomats and politicians, it can be said that the opportunity has come for leading Western governments to interpret, apply and associate their potential Western diplomatic trainings via utilising leading aspects of contemporary Islamic thought along with various Habermasian notions. These notions include and not limited to the Islamic
thought on democracy and intercultural and religious dialogues and other significant Habermasian epistemological insights against the relevant socio-political; events and the literature directed to interpreting them. These include Habermas’s critical theory and his theory of communicative action; Habermas’s epistemological insights on education, religion, politics, political ambitions, democratisation, rationality, public opinion; critical thinking and critical reflection, the concept of public sphere; society and moral reasoning and cognitive interest and instrumental reason.

Since debating Arab-West international relations is manifested in Western mainstream media, socio-political and religious hurdles emerge and necessitate arduous effort to address and overcome them, especially when dealing with Arab Muslims in the MENA region. Therefore, the implementation of Habermas’s works along with leading Islamic notions on international relations can be fruitful if not necessary. In this regard, Habermas’s intuitions have not been limited to one discourse only but to different fields of sciences ranging from philosophy to social sciences, natural sciences, law and politics; education, psychology and many others. Importantly, Habermas has influenced many generations of intellectual thinkers across the world. Old and young alike have been impacted by his concept of rationality and life-world when it comes to creating a unified public sphere and rational societies.

Habermas’s experiences while living in Germany changed his perception of the way the power structures worked and motivated him to strive for creating a better society that would not oppress its members. As a result, liberating people
from social restraints have been Habermas’s goal throughout his professional career. He continues to inspire people with his works based on rationality and hopes to achieve a society that will allow people to come together and interact so that the socio-political issues can be brought to an end. In this connection, it is essential to state that Habermas has a firm belief in the human capabilities to change the society and take control of what is rightfully for them. Therefore, a number of cohesive and rational Western inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial strategies towards the MENA region have been devised by the researcher, based on various Habermasian and Islamic notions in order to strengthen Arab-West international relations and satisfy the requirements of the analysis of this dissertation.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this dissertation, I concentrated on creating pragmatic and rational ramifications that are associated with future Arab-West inter-governmental and inter-ambassadorial relations, with special attention directed towards analysing the ideology behind political Islam based on various Habermasian epistemological intuitions. Furthermore, I endeavoured to use such Habermasian notions that have been applied throughout the literature in order to guide the dissertation to reach its objectives and create ramifications that can be implemented within the future diplomatic training programs for Western diplomats and politicians.

I explored the dominant socio-political and religious dilemmas facing the Arab Muslims in the MENA region and demonstrated the value of pragmatic notions to rectify them and endeavoured to strengthen future Arab-West international relations by applying leading Habermasian notions along with contemporary Islamic intuitions. In this regard, many initiatives in the last two decades have been conducted in the pursuance of consolidating and rejuvenating Arab Muslims in the MENA region and Western international relations. However, the realities on the ground show otherwise, especially when pondering the current devastating political disturbances and civil wars occurring in the MENA region since 2003. Therefore, my use of Habermas’s methods of critical analysis within the study developed dynamic diplomatic educational schemes as ways to train Western diplomats and politicians to achieve cohesive Arab-West international relations.
This approach sought to mitigate the barriers, provided recommendations for mutual understanding of bilateral relations and facilitated better handling approaches to future Arab-West political relations and dialogues. Finally, Habermas’s critical theory and the theory of communicative action served as a focal point that facilitated contemporary interpretations and approaches to re-evaluate the future of Arab-West international relations, and provided alternative strategic solutions that can potentially empower Arab Muslims and Western diplomats and politicians.

6.1 Limitations and Recommendations

While the objectives of this dissertation tend to be auspicious in terms of addressing the existing socio-political and religious dilemmas in the MENA region, there exist various limitations of the dissertation that emanate primarily from its analytical and theoretical nature. In this connection, the dissertation has concentrated on analysing matters related to Arab-West international relations, religious notions and Western foreign policies and responsibilities towards the MENA region. The dissertation has also focused on the future of Arab-West socio-political and interfaith communication approaches and applied Habermas’s critical theory, his theory of communicative action and other self-reflective analysis. As a result, using such an analytical approach with those matters may unavoidably impede the dissertation from focusing on further thoughts related to the fragile Arab-West international relations, including globalisation, secularisation, regional economic growth and an in-depth concentration on the growth of extremist fundamentalist movements. Additionally, an example concerns the environmental
degradation that arises from the use of chemical weaponry and weapons of mass
destruction in the ongoing conflicts in the MENA region, along with the
hegemonic approaches over the global economy and the parochialism they produce
in return for vested interest and prejudice on both sides of the debate. As a result,
the dissertation may have overlooked certain crucial factors affecting the progress
of Arab-West international relations, and therefore, further theoretical and
empirical studies to generate encyclopaedic and detailed research need to be
undertaken and applied, in order to explore other possibilities of achieving the
intended recommendations of the dissertation.

Furthermore, the theoretical model of the dissertation is applied to Western
diplomats, politicians and those who are at the frontiers of politics and
international diplomacy. This closes off the implication of the dissertation to the
Arab diplomats and politicians; therefore, further studies that examine the
proposed theoretical model in a different context will be crucial in order to soften
the boundaries between the Arab Muslims in the MENA region and Westerners.

Precisely speaking, rare academic works in the field of Arab-West
international relations have been conducted through the utilisation of Habermas’s
critical theory and his theory of communicative action. Optimistically, the
discoveries of this dissertation will provide contributions towards a better and
rational understanding of the challenges facing Arab Muslims in the MENA region
and facilitate motives for further research on this very important domain.
Regarding the research limitations, the dissertation endorses further explorations
and investigations related to the historical and cultural Islamic perspectives to be
conducted such as Islamic literature on international relations, modern and independent Arab political movements etc. In addition, in order to reinforce the experiential legitimacy of future research on Arab-West international relations, further concentration needs to be placed on the role of Western mainstream media, educational institutions and others think tanks. In this connection, it would be more effective if the intended concentration was to be established based on non-Western understanding of the issues at hand in order to pragmatically show the other side of the story to Western masses.


Alahmed, A. (2016). The Muslim brotherhood in contemporary Egypt: Democracy
redefined or confined? Journal of International and Global Studies, 7(2), 106-108.

Retrieved from https://goo.gl/XUy3z9


Al-Tabari, A. M. B. J. (1989). The history of al-Tabari: General introduction and from the


https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/dec/03/political-Islam-poised-arab-spring


Bracken, S. (2010). Discussing the importance of ontology and epistemology awareness in

Retrieved from http://eprints.worc.ac.uk/843/1/FinalSBrackenPractitionerResearch.pdf


Effarah, J. (2016). *What are the sacred roots of Islam? And the planned modern Islamic society*. Bloomington: AuthorHouse


Garfinkle, A. (2016). The fall of empires and the formation of the modern Middle East. Orbis, 60(2), 204-216. doi:10.1016/j.orbis.2016.02.001


University of California Press.


Ikenberry, G. (2000). Reviewed work: Revolution and world politics: The rise and fall of
the sixth great power by Fred Halliday. *Foreign Affairs*, 79(3), 161.


doi:10.1177/0196859909338408


doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2011.12.001


Khan, M. (2014). Islam, democracy and Islamism after the counterrevolution in Egypt. Middle East Policy, 21(1), 75-86. doi:10.1111/mepo.12058


Liotta, P. H., & Miskel, J. F. (2012). The real population bomb: Megacities, global

1967 Arab-Israeli war: Origins and consequences (pp. 1-21). New york:
Cambridge University Press.

for proportionism in ethical discourse and Roman Catholic moral theology.

times. Religious Education, 100(1), 38-51. doi:10.1080/00344080590904671

International Journal of the Humanities, 4(3), 63-68. Retrieved from
https://goo.gl/uutNic

Lovat, T., Dally, K., Clement, N., & Toomey, R. (2011). Values pedagogy and teacher
education: Re-conceiving the foundations. Australian Journal of Teacher
Education, 36(7), 59-72. doi:10.14221/ajte.2011v36n7.3

Social theory and educational research: Understanding Foucault, Habermas,

J. Arthur & T. Lovat (Eds.), The Routledge international handbook of education,
religion and values (pp. 337-349). London: Routledge.

special role in restoring Convivencia. Cham: Springer International Publishing.


Qurie, A. (2015). *Peace negotiations in Palestine: From the second intifada to the*


Schirrmacher, C. (2016). Political Islam: When faith turns out to be politics (R. McClary,

Bonn: Culture and Science Publ. (Original work published n.d.).


Spector, S. (2014). Gog and Magog in the White House: Did biblical prophecy inspire the
invasion of Iraq? Journal of Church and State, 56(3), 534-552.
doi:10.1093/jcs/cst003


http://www.alhewar.com/SadekShura.htm


Syria crisis: UK puts forward UN proposal (2013, August 28), BBC News. Retrieved from


doi:10.3167/isr.2014.290104


Wilson, G. (2014). Applying the responsibility to protect to the ‘Arab spring’. *Liverpool*


