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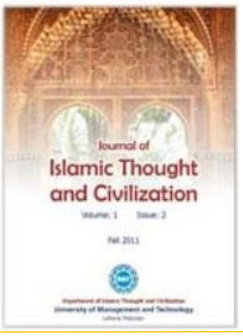

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ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS AT CROSSROADS: THE CHOICE BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND CONTEXT-DRIVEN APPROACH TO POLITICS. CASE STUDY ON THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN

Dr. László Csicsmann

ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is to analyse the ongoing transformation process within the Islamist movements using the example of the moderate Islamic Action Front party in Jordan. The dilemma of participation in the 2010 general elections raised tensions between the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan and its political wing, the Islamic Action Front, and between doves and hawks of the same organizations. Internal debate on the future has started recently among different groups within the Islamist movement in Jordan.

The research is based on the author's recent field experience in Jordan (April–July 2010, Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship at the American Centre of Oriental Research, Amman, Jordan). The author also conducted research in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Egypt, where several interviews were carried out with leading and lower level Islamist politicians. The dynamic changes within Islamic Action Front Party in Jordan and its relation with the regime has been used as reference point. The main question of the research was aa how the changing political and regional context shapes decisions of the Islamist with special attention to the acceptance of democratic values and human rights, political participation, and the meanings of Islamic values in the 21st century, possible cooperation with secular parties/movements/the regime.

Keywords: Islamist Movements, Democracy, Political participation, Moderation, Post-Islamism, Political inclusion, Arab World, Ideology, Islamic Action Front, Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, Jordan

THE DUALITY OF ISLAMISM AND POST-ISLAMISM IN THE CONTEMPORARY MIDDLE EAST

The last two decades have brought fundamental political changes within Middle Eastern autocracies.[1] After the collapse of the bipolar world order, several circumstances led to the so-called *vicious circle* of liberalization and de-liberalization. In most of the autocratic republics, a more open public space began to emerge at a certain degree with a public discourse more concentrated on political and economic mismanagement of the country. The Islamist movements[2] in the Middle East have been playing on the advantages of the growing unpopularity of

[1] The author would like to acknowledge the generous financial support of the American Center of Oriental Research (ACOR) in Amman, which made field research possible between April-July 2010 and April-July 2007.

[2] In this paper we use the term Islamist groups borrowing the definition used by Omar Ashour: "Islamist groups… are sociopolitical movements that base and justify their political principles, ideologies, behaviors and objectives on their understanding of Islam or on their understanding of a certain past interpretation of Islam." Omar Ashour, *The De-Radicalization of Jihadists. Transforming Armed Islamist Movements* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 4.

governments and asking for further political liberalization. The regimes themselves and the Islamist movements are at crossroads on political participation accepting the current, non-democratic rules of the game. Many Western politicians argue against the integration of Islamist movements within the existing political framework using the example of the election victory of Hamas in 2006 as a negative reference point. Many other experts believe in political inclusion as a tool of moderation, alarming us that exclusion may strengthen the possibility of re-radicalization. Both experts and politicians often neglect the fact that these Islamist movements are not homogenous entities, as serious internal differences on the future exist endangering the cohesion of these organizations. A re-interpretation of former political goals and ideological principles has started among different political fractions within Islamists.

Recent literature on Middle Eastern political developments shows a certain kind of transformation within Islamist movements, what the French scholar, Olivier Roy called as "Post-Islamism". The religious-oriented political movements have begun to emphasize the unresolved national problems instead of focusing only on the international scene. National integration and political participation became a viable alternative of a radical, military interference into the political life of the state. Most of the leaders of these moderate organizations accept the peaceful coexistence with the ruling elite, 'postponing' the primary goal of implementation of an Islamic state based on *Sharia* at the same time. As Roy pointed out, the main ideological commitment of Islamists is not politics, but society: "The contemporary religious revival in Islam is targeting society more than the state..."[3] More and more Islamist organizations have started to give up the military struggle against the infidel authoritarian regime, which was the ultimate answer in the 1970s by many armed movements (e.g. Islamic Jihad, *Takfir wa-l Hijra)*.

Islamist movements have embedded more deeply into the national environment. Roy notes: "The mainstream Islamist movements in the 1990s have failed to produce anything resembling an 'Islamist International' along the lines of the Communist International (or Comintern)."[4] The case of Hamas and *Fatah* as rival organizations can help to understand the impact of national interests on political movements. Islamic symbols are not only used in the Palestinian Authority by Hamas, but also by the more nationalist party, *Fatah*. And *vice versa*, *Fatah* gains popularity by relying on Islamic ideals, which clearly shows that a pragmatist approach is more beneficial than relying on a dogmatic ideology without flexibility. Another example of the nationalization of Islamist movements is the Shiite *Hezbollah*, which was viewed by many experts as the right hand of the Iranian theocratic regime. Recent articles have shown a different picture. The so-called "libanonization" of *Hezbollah* started in 1992 with participation in the Lebanese government and with the gradual rejection of armed struggle.[5]

Peter Mandeville, offering a critical evaluation of Roy argument shows that Islamist movements differ in their main goals. Some organizations especially those that are at odds with the regime, seek for capturing the state. Mandeville summarizes the term Post-Islamism with five characteristics: [6]

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[3] Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam. The Search for a New Ummah* (London: Hurst & Company, 2004), 4.
[4] Roy, *Globalised Islam*, 62.
[5] Graham E. Fuller, "The Hezballah-Iran Connection: Model for Sunni Resistance," *The Washington Quarterly*, 30 (2006-2007): 143.
[6] Peter Mandeville, *Global Political Islam* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 343.

1. Islamist movements are nationalist in orientation.
2. Following an Islamist path does not have any strategic importance as the international community favours spreading democratic values over religious ideologies.
3. Muslims do not vote according to religious beliefs, but rather their political conviction.
4. The political participation of Islamist movements involuntary helps in the secularisation process of their home country.
5. Individualistic religious approaches have taken preference over collective practices ("The privatization of religion").

In Asef Bayat's understanding, the term Post-Islamism is a condition and a project simultaneously. On one hand, Post-Islamism is an existing reality, but on the other hand, it is a plan under discussion among Islamists on how to combine Islam with the values of modernity (democracy, liberalism, human rights, etc.).[7] Some Islamist parties embrace the idea that modern values are inherent in Islam, rejecting what several Western scholars and politicians argue that Islam is a backward religion and Islam and democracy are incompatible.

It must be underlined that with the presence of a Post-Islamist trend, classical Islamism is not a phenomenon of the past. "But the advent of post-Islamism, as a trend, should not be seen necessarily as the historical end of Islamism" – wrote Bayat.[8] According to his interpretation of current trends in the Middle East, the Egyptian *Wasat* Party, the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP), and the Indian Jami'at-i Islami belong to the category of Post-Islamism. Movements like the Palestinian Hamas, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood or the Jordanian Islamic Action Front represent (classical) Islamism. However, in my opinion there is no clear dividing line among different types of movements, especially because the new movements usually split from the mother organization, as was the case with the Egyptian Wasat Party. The existence of divergent fractions within the Islamist movements must be taken into consideration.

Politicians and experts often show Islamist movements as static political actors with never-changing political agenda. It is often neglected that an intensive debate on the future started between members belonging to the different political wings (and different generations) of these popular societal movements. The main disagreement among political fractions is about participation in the general elections and the commitment to the original ideology of the founding fathers. On one hand, the usually called "dovish members" think that a *Sharia*-based society and political system is the best solution for the contemporary challenges of their host country. However, at the same time they also noticed that the implementation of the ideological principles is not possible in the 21st century. These moderates show a willingness to form ad-hoc coalitions with secular parties and cooperate with the regime on issues with shared interests. On the other hand, the conservatives ("hawkish") see any kind of political participation as a legitimization

[7] Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic, Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press), 11.
[8] Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic*, 13.

given to the oppressive policies of the regime. The existing political fractions often correspond with members belonging to different generations.[9]

THE OPPORTUNITY COST OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Many Islamist movements consider the opportunity cost of exclusion higher than political participation. However, political inclusion is not only a decision of Islamists themselves, but usually it is the privilege of the ruling elite. A minimum level of mutual understanding and an acceptance of the existence and political activity of the other is necessary, but not satisfactory precondition for political inclusion. The compromise between Islamists and the regime usually touches upon the rules of the political game. These non-democratic arrangements are used as the safety valves of the political elite, minimizing the possibility of the evolution of a popular political party in the opposition. Despite the authoritarian structure of the state, many of the moderate Islamists are still convinced of the advantages of manoeuvring into the political labyrinth, which offers no real influence on political decisions. Some moderate movements are legally licensed political parties (e.g. Islamic Action Front Party in Jordan, Justice and Development Party in Morocco, Islah Party in Yemen), while others belong to the semi-legal (Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt), or illegal categories (Muslim Brotherhood in Syria).

A re-interpretation of former political goals and ideological principles has started among different political fractions within the ranks of the Islamists. These political wings often coincide with members belonging to different generations. Khalil Anani, an expert on Islamist movements, analyzed the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and found four generations of members very different aspirations, with very different experiences.[10] Some of the members who were among the founding fathers are still alive and they are the more conservative element. The other generation lived under the Nasser years witnessed the radicalization of the movement, and they are loyal to the more radical interpretation of Sayyid Qutb, who was hanged by Nasser. The youngest generation is the most interesting; they live in a very different political environment than their predecessors. We were told that Islamist movements are backward political actors in the post-modern society. It is not true. The youngest generation has access to the latest technology, they communicate among the members through blogs and chats. As most of the blogs (like *Ana Ikhwan*) are in Arab language, these blogs are not exclusively Egyptian or Jordanian, but Arab. The youngest generation is very skeptical about the old guard and usually they are in the middle (*wasat*). Sometimes they try to break away from the parent organization and form a new political party (Wasat Party). They are in the middle between the doves and hawks. The same story is valid in the case of Hamas, which after the outbreak of the second *intifada* started a debate on participation in the upcoming elections. Hamas shows the major dilemma of inclusion or exclusion. The moderate wing led by Ismail Haniyya argued in favor of participation, accepting the non-democratic rules of the game, while the more radical element – Khaled Meshal in Damascus – stressed the importance of the armed struggle. Most of the moderate movements in

[9] Nathan J. Brown, Amr Hamzavy and Marina Ottaway, "Islamists Movements and the Democratic Process in the Arab World: Exploring the Gray Zones," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace – Herbert-Quandt Stiftung. *Middle East Series*, 67 (March 2006): 7.

[10] Khalil al-Anani, "The Young Brotherhood in Search of a New Path," *Current Trends in Islamic Ideology*, 9 (2009), Hudson Institute, online: http://www.currenttrends.org/research/detail/the-young-brotherhood-in-search-of-a-new-path (accessed 01 September 2010).

the Middle East face the same dilemma: participation or re-radicalization. The result of the international isolation of the Hamas government led to re-radicalization in the Gaza strip. More radical movements belong to the Al-Qaeda, Jihadi Salafism emerged as a response to the failure of Hamas. They totally ban music and one of their political leaders even called for an Islamic Emirate in Gaza. Hamas killed most of the members of this organization. It shows us that Islamist movements cannot be analyzed as static political actors who never change. The other general question about the future of the Islamists is whether they are committed more to the founding ideology and to establishing an Islamist state on the base of *Shariah* or they are more pragmatic and open to hear the needs of their voters (context driven). Several studies have shown that many Islamist movements dropped their primary goal to establish an Islamic state and realized the opportunity to participate in elections and forming coalition with other non-Islamist parties or even more committed to certain kind of cooperation with the regime.

"Inclusion leads to moderation" hypothesis should be tested in a more careful manner. Th much criticized transition paradigm believes in the inclusion of radical groups in the democratization process.[11] If the alternative cost of participating in the election process is higher than keeping the radical tone of the movement, then acceptance of the democratic and non-violent method will prevail. In the Middle East, however, the rules of the game are usually undemocratic, which means that enforcing the democratic principle does not mean the possibility of challenging the regime.

POLITICAL INTEGRATION OF ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS IN THE JORDANIAN POLITICAL MILIEU

In a recently published article, Tamara Cofman Wittes has analysed three different groups of Islamist movements regarding the possibility of engaging them politically.[12] The first category used by the author is a small group of radical organizations linked to the so-called global *jihad*. The most prominent example for that category is Al-Qaeda, or second generation of Al-Qaeda type organizations targeting mainly Western interests. Engaging them is not possible on the short-run. A recent survey in the Islamic World carried out by Gallup has showed the weakness of such radicals. According to the data, only 7 percent of 1.5 billion Muslims support any kind of violence, while there is a 'silenced majority' who rejects the use of force.[13]

Within the second category, we found Islamists focusing mainly on national or local issues combining peaceful and militant methods as well. Hamas in the Palestinian Authority or *Hezbollah* in Lebanon are the most prominent examples of this group. As Wittes said: 'they can always use bullets to cancel ballots (…) and they seldom want to give up the privileges that the gun brings them.'[14] Participation in politics is not a positive step toward democratizing autocratic regimes.

The third category of Islamists are the peaceful, local, nationalist ones who see participation in the political process as the sole legitimate method for challenging the regime. Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Jordanian Islamic Action Front Party, or Turkey's AKP are the most important Islamist

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[11] Jillian Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation, Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 11-18.

[12] T. Cofman Wittes, "Islamist Parties. Three Kinds of Movements," *Journal of Democracy*, 19 (2008): 7-13.

[13] J. L. Esposito and D. Mogahed, eds., *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think*, (New York: Gallup Press, 2007), 69.

[14] T. Cofman Wittes, *Islamist Parties*, 8.

organizations accepting the formal rules of the game. If certain conditions are met, these non-radical groups are the best example for inclusion within the political space.

GLOBAL JIHAD IN JORDAN

In the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, all of the three above-mentioned types of Islamist movements exist. Organizations linked to global *jihadi* activity were never popular in Jordan. The Jordanian society has strongly condemned the 9/11 terror attacks against the United States, and the government officially expressed its commitment to Washington in the war against terrorism. On the other hand, close political ties with Washington has made Jordanian public opinion suspicious about foreign policy initiatives of the King or government. According to the poll conducted by Pew, 43 percent of the Jordanian population supported terror attack against civilians in order to defend Islam in the summer of 2002. The sympathy toward suicide bombing however dropped to 29 percent in 2006.[15]

Mentioning just a few examples of names and organizations with links to global jihad, Abdullah Azzam, Abu Musab al-Zarkawi, al-Maqdisi and the radical movement called *Hizb ul-Tahrir* (HT) are of special importance. The root of every kind of Islamist activity, whether peaceful or violent, is the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood (MB), which officially came into existence in 1945. According to many sources, the MB started its activity during the 1930's under the patronage of the Egyptian MB. Even Abdullah Azzam, who was at the forefront of the Afghan *jihad* against the Soviet Union, came from the Jordanian MB. As Shmuel Bar in his article on the history of the Jordanian MB has noted, the radical wing led by Abdullah Azzam, which left the country for Afghanistan during the 1980's, was unique in Jordan. Azzam and his followers were not satisfied with the peaceful strategy of the leadership; they wanted a more rapid political and societal change through armed *jihad.*[16] While Azzam died in Afghanistan in 1989, several of the so-called Arab Afghans (Maqdisi, Zarqawi) returned to Jordan, participating in the recruitment of new Salafis. The agglomeration of Amman, especially Zarqa (where Zarqawi was born) and Salt, became a centre of radical Islamists. After several years in prison, Zarqawi joined the Taliban in 1999 with several hundreds of Jordanian followers. Until the 9/11 terror attacks against the United States, radical *jihadi* activism was on a low level in the Kingdom. Maqdisi was also imprisoned in 1996.[17]

However, the outbreak of the war against Saddam Hussein in 2003 made the Kingdom a target for suicide bombers. Abu Musab al-Zarkawi soon became the leader of the so-called Iraqi Al-Qaeda, planning attacks against Jordanian interests. The mass influx of Iraqi refugees from March 2003 also made the Kingdom vulnerable. Jordan hosts around one million Iraqi refugees, who settled mainly in and around Amman. The Iraqi uprising had its immediate consequences on the security of Jordan: the suicide attack on 9 November 2005 demonstrated the existence of illegitimate Iraqi armed groups in the country headed by Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi.[18] The regime responded with an illiberal counter-terrorism law, which enlarged the powers of the security services. It is greatly

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[15] "*The Great Divide. How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other? Europe's Muslims More Moderate"*, Pew Global Attitude Project' June 2006. [Online:] http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=253 (accessed 10 June 2009).

[16] S. Bar, *The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan* (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1998), 31.

[17] Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation*, 202-203.

[18] Many Jordanians share the conviction that Jordan will not be able to avoid the impacts of the security situation in Iraq. The suicide bombings against Amman's 5-star hotels in 2005 were the first step toward a worsening security prospect.

feared in Jordan that the infiltration of terrorist groups will subvert the societal harmony of the Kingdom. Zarqawi was killed in Iraq by American forces in 2006.[19]

The international community expressed its recognition of the commitment of the Kingdom to condemn religious extremism and terrorism. This policy is echoed with the Amman Message launched in November 2004 by King Abdullah II, whose goal was to promote a moderate form of Islam in the region and to win the loyalty of the religious opposition.[20] The promulgation of the Amman Message coincided with the growing fear about the spillover of Iraq's civil strife in Jordan, especially after the suicide attacks at Amman's hotels in 2005.

Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami (Islamic Liberation Party) was founded by a Palestinian member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Yusuf al-Nabahani in 1952, a former student of al-Azhar in Cairo. His views on the role of the centrality of the Palestinian issue in *Jihad* and on the establishment of an Islamic state on the principle of *Khilafa* had differed severely from the standpoint of the leadership of the MB.[21] Nabahani had tried to register his movement as a political party in the Kingdom, but it was refused by the regime several times. HT as an illegal organization attempted to overthrow the monarchy in Jordan, but the movement denied this fact. Today, HT is not a significant political group in the Kingdom; its main area of operation is Central Asia and the Muslim communities in Western Europe.

THE MODERATE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD AND THE REGIME

As mentioned before, the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood originated in the 1930's, when the writings of Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, influenced Muslims around the Middle East. In 1945, Emir Abdullah himself delivered the inauguration speech of the Jordanian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, which marked the beginning of a positive approach by the Hashemite dynasty toward Islamists. The regime played the *Islamist card* in order to balance the powerful secular-nationalist wave calling for revolution. Only the radical *Hizb al-Tahrir* (HT) was banned during the Cold War years and the Brotherhood remained a political party and civil organization. The Muslim Brotherhood won only 8.3 percent of the votes in the 1956 election, which showed the limited popularity of Islamism at that time.[22] From 1957 till 1992, all political parties were banned in Jordan; the Muslim Brotherhood was a semi-legal political organization focusing on non-political issues (charity).

In this short paper, it is not possible to go into details about the history of the Muslim Brotherhood, but it must be noted that at historical turning points (1957, 1970) members of the *Ikhwan* supported the controversial policies of the regime. In 1957, when leftist revolutionary forces challenged the legitimacy of the Hashemite dynasty and the monarchy, the MB – despite differences over the dismissal of Glubb Pasha during the early 1950's – backed the decision of

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[19] See on recent Salafi activism in the Kingdom, J. J. Escobar Stemmann, "Islamic Activism in Jordan", *Athena Intelligence Journal*, 3 (2008): 16-17.

[20] The Amman Interfaith Message. [Online:] http://ammanmessage.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=80&Itemid=54&lang=en (accessed 15 April 2007).

[21] Schwedler, Faith in Moderation, 200.

[22] E. Lust-Okar, "The Decline of Jordanian Political Parties: Myth or Reality?" *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 33 (2002): 545-569.

King Hussein striking down the Nasser-backed political forces in the Kingdom.[23] In 1970, when the civil war broke out between the Palestinian fighters and the monarchy (Black September), the Muslim Brotherhood again proved its loyalty to the regime.

From the beginning of 1980's, the relations between the regime and the *Ikhwan* started to change. The main controversial issue behind the worsening relationship was the support for the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood during the 1970's and early 1980's. The Jordanian branch of the *Ikhwan* helped their Syrian counterpart in order to overthrow the secularist republic of the Alawite minority in Syria, which caused tensions between the Hashemites and the Asad-regime in Damascus. However, the crackdown of the Syrian Brotherhood in Hama in 1982 forced King Hussein to pressure the Jordanian Islamists on terminating the ties between the Syrian and the Jordanian *Ikhwan*.[24]

The economic crisis of the 1980's in the Kingdom and the growing unpopularity of the regime, placed *Ikhwan* on the opposite side of the government. Despite the fact that all political parties were banned until 1992, the Muslim Brotherhood had chosen to participate in the 1989 elections and Islamists (members of MB and independents as well) won 33 seats in the Lower House of Parliament. A fragmented opposition—consisting of leftists and Islamists—dominated the Kingdom's first quasi-freely elected Parliament. The political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic Action Front Party was founded as a political party in 1992 and it participated in the 1993 elections.[25]

INTERNAL DEBATES WITHIN THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD AND THE ROLE OF THE HAMAS FACTOR

The Jordanian monarchy is a unique example of political engagement of moderate Islamism in the Middle East. This paper shows that the participation of moderate Islamists in the political process is one of the most effective ways to pacify the radicals. The political evolution of the Hashemite Kingdom is quite different from other Middle Eastern countries, but the experience on the history of Islamism in Jordan is vital for our understanding of other regime types.

From the beginning of 1990's, the Islamist Action Front became the most popular political party in the monarchy. Generally, political parties are very weak in Jordan. The election system favours independent leaders affiliated with a tribe supporting the dynasty. The election law in force was drafted in 1993, months before the elections (in 1993) to marginalize the vociferous critics of the regime, the Islamic Action Front, which dominated (as independent candidates) the legislature from 1989 till 1993. The 1993 election law was based on the *one man, one vote system*, whereby eligible citizens can cast only one vote per district. The authorities changed the size of voting districts in favour of tribal areas, thereby playing on personal relations and loyalties. The voting system evidently placed parties at the margin of political life appealing to the neo-patriarchal arrangement of the state.[26] In the Hashemite Kingdom, usually tribal leaders have been elected as

[23] P. Robins, *A History of Jordan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 99-102.
[24] S. Bar, *The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan*, 38.
[25] R. Curtis, *Jordan in Transition. From Hussein to Abdullah* (London: Lynee Rienner Publishers, Boulder 2002), 22.
[26] F. Schirin, *Jordanian Survival Strategy: The Election Law as a 'Safety Valve',* 'Middle Eastern Studies' Vol. 41, No. 6, (2005): 889-898.

MP. Political parties are viewed as suspicious institutions, potentially influenced by foreign powers.

When the leaders of the *Ikhwan* decided to establish a political party, the assumption was to fill 40 percent of the Islamic Action Front with independent Islamists, and the rest (60 percent) with members of the Muslim Brotherhood. In reality, the Muslim Brotherhood has been dominating by the Islamic Action Front Party and independent Islamists have been marginalized from the beginning. This initiated a debate among members of the party on participation in the election process, the role of women in politics, the meaning of the dreamed Islamic states in the 21st century, etc. A major transformation process has started within the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood, which has become a Western-like political movement. As Anne Sofie Roald noted in her article: 'the three religious concepts, *shura*, 'Islamic state', and 'female leadership' have all turned in a secular direction in the policy of the Muslim Brotherhood, as *shura* has become 'western democracy', 'Islamic state' has become 'civil state', and 'Islamic leadership' has, to a certain extent, started to involve even women in the pattern of gender equality.[27]

The *old guard* of the Muslim Brotherhood (e.g. Ishaq Farhan) emphasized its opposition to allow the participation of the *Ikhwan* in the election process from 1989. They argued that the current political regime in Jordan is not democratic, and with participation in the election process, the Muslim Brotherhood would be a party to the oppressive actions of the government. It must be noted that most of the *Ikhwan* members were in favour of participatory politics in 1989 instead of boycotting elections.[28]

Islamic Action Front participated in general elections in 1993 but boycotted the 1997 elections. The normalization policy with the State of Israel and the peace treaty in 1994 marked the beginning of a radicalization process within the ranks of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood and the IAF as well. The IAF with several other parties in the opposition have started an anti-normalization campaign criticizing the foreign policy of the King.

After the 11th September terror attack and failure of the Oslo peace process, the Islamic Action Front party has attracted more citizens, especially from the Palestinian community in and around Amman. The support for the Palestinian Hamas has been growing since the mid 1990's. Historically, the relationship between Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood started after World War II. The older founding fathers of Hamas were members of the (Jordanian) Muslim Brotherhood and shared a common vision of Islamization of the society. In 1988, the Muslim Brotherhood helped Hamas members to compose the Charter of Hamas, which called for *jihad* in historical Palestine. Hamas has maintained an office within the building of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, which proved the strong political ties between them. A *modus vivendi* has developed between the leaders of Hamas and King Hussein tolerating the operation of the Islamic Resistance Movement in the Kingdom. However, in 1999 King Abdullah II chose to shut down the office of Hamas in Amman and expelled its leaders due to security reasons.

The elections held in June 2003 witnessed the return of the Islamic Action Front to electoral politics after boycotting participatory politics in 1997, despite its heavy criticism of the regime.

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[27] Anne Sofie Roald, "From Theocracy to Democracy? Towards Secularisation and Individualisation in the Policy of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan", *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, 8 (2008): 106-107.

[28] J. Schwedler, *Faith in Moderation*, 158.

Contrary to all expectations, the Islamic Action Front performed poorly, winning only 17 parliamentary seats, despite the fact that the outbreak of the war against Iraq enlarged its support base. Also 5 independent Islamists, members of the Muslim Brotherhood, won seats in the Chamber of Deputies.[29] The results of the 2003 elections did not challenge the status quo: independent tribal leaders dominate the 14th Parliament. Jordanians of Palestinian origin are under-represented in the new legislation. They secured only between 17 and 25 seats, which prove the imbalances in voter districts.[30]

The Hamas victory in the Palestinian national elections held in March 2006 caused growing fears in Amman of an Islamist takeover of the Hashemite dynasty. Officially, King Abdullah labelled Palestinian elections as democratic, and he raised his voice against any interference into the internal affairs of the country. Hamas maintains close ties with the main Jordanian Islamist organization, Islamist Action Front. Zaki Bin Arsheed, a politician close to Hamas, was elected in March 2006 as the secretary general of the party. The outcome of the Palestinian election affected political harmony between Islamists and the regime: specifically the MP's of IAF called for further political liberalization and the adoption of a new election law with equal opportunities for all political parties. In 2006, the intelligence service discovered a secret armoury operated by Hamas members in Jordan.

In 2007, Islamists boycotted municipal elections. They participated in the 2007 general elections, but the outcome of the elections was a political disaster for the Islamic Action Front Party. Only 6 of its 22 candidates won a seat in the Parliament, which was a major setback for the party. The main reason behind this negative performance was a miscalculation of the popularity of the organization among voters. They were sure that all of the 22 candidates would win a seat, as it was in the previous elections. However, the situation was different. Why did they fail? One of the answers was the political marginalization of the Islamist movement by the regime. As the relations between the regime and the IAF worsened, especially in the post 9/11 contexts, Islamists were ousted from university campuses, from NGOs, etc. Only professional unions were open for them. A strict control started, especially at the University of Jordan, among student organizations active in campuses. One of the techniques to oust professors affiliated with the MB was not to renew their contracts or simply ask them to leave the university. The regime accused MB of playing in the hands of the '*Shia crescent*'. The Jordanian King was the one who introduced the term *Shia* Crescent after the outbreak of the Third Gulf War (2003), referring to the cooperation between Iran-Syria-*Hezbollah* and the *Sunni* Hamas. The other thing equally important was that the IAF could not reach to the ordinary Jordanian audience, and kept focusing mainly on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to CSS polls, the Transjordanian cast their ballots according to their tribal affiliation and not their political ideology.[31] Tribal affiliation is not a top priority among Palestinian citizens. The current crisis within the movement started in the middle of the election campaign. While the MB wanted to boycott completely both elections, the IAF members preferred participation. For the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood participation meant

[29] R. R. Curtis and J. Schwedler, "Return to Democratization or New Hybrid Regime? The 2003 Elections in Jordan", *Middle East Policy*, 11 (2004): 138-151.

[30] Ch. Parker, "Transformation without Transition: Electoral Politics, Network Ties, and the Persistence of the Shadow State in Jordan," in *Elections in the Middle East. What Do They Mean?*, ed. I. A. Hamdy, (Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2004), 156.

[31] See the various polls conducted by the Center for Strategic Studies in Jordan (http://www.css-jordan.org/subDefault.aspx?PageId=36&PollType=2) , accessed 10 November 2010.

contributing to the legitimization of the oppressive methods of the regime. IAF members argued that they lost more in boycotting the elections. The moderate wing, doves, within IAF wants to be more independent from the parent organization, and an internal struggle has started. Participating in the general elections served the interest of the moderates. In 2008, a hawkish politician, Hamam Said replaced Salam Falahat in the general leader position of MB. Hamam Said, who is sceptical about political participation has frequently criticized the regime, and called for new election law.

In August 2008, for the first time the Jordanian *mukhabarat* met with several Hamas officials from Beirut and discussed a new *modus vivendi* between the regime and the Islamist organization. It seems that the Jordanian government accepted the fact that Hamas is a political reality in the Middle East and ignoring it is contra productive. Officially Hamas has no relations with IAF.

The visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Jordan in 2009 caused tensions between the regime and the IAF. Zaki bin Irshaid said in an interview that Pope Benedict XVI must apologise to Muslims first before his visit to the Kingdom pointing to the controversial Pope's Regensburg speech in 2006.

In May 2009, Zaki bin Irshaid, the leader of the IAF resigned from his post due to internal debate within the party. One of the members of the old guard, a dove, Ishaq Farhan was elected as new interim Secretary General.[32]

The regional factor is very important for understanding the rise of the less moderate elements within the movement. The Islamist movement politically benefited from the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip organizing demonstrations against Israeli blockade, which started in 2007. The Operation Caste Lead, the military intervention of Israel against Hamas in Gaza at the end of 2008, and January 2009 has contributed to the sympathy towards Palestinians. Islamists, who control the professional unions organized demonstrations immediately after the Gaza flotilla attack in Amman (4th circle). Several thousand attended the demonstration. As the general public opinion is very negative about Israel, the King has started to co-opt an anti-Israeli rhetoric. In his interview with Wall Street Journal, he criticized the current Israeli government and told the American audience that Israel endangered its existence due to its politics (settlement policy issues).[33] And right after the Gaza flotilla raid, the King brought to Jordan most of the Muslim citizens who were aboard the Turkish ship, offering them medical treatment and helping them to go home. The strategy of the King worked very well; the regime, using a part of the rhetoric of the Islamist movement, distanced the population from Islamists.

A general election within the IAF organization is expected this spring. After the first meeting, which elected the Shura Council, the main decision-making body of the IAF, a major split surfaced within the movement and it was propagated widely in the media causing frustration for the Islamist movement. As usual, the Shura Council of the parent organization, the Muslim Brotherhood is the body responsible for the nomination of the next Secretary General of the party, and they nominated Zaki bin Irshaid, the former secretary general who resigned in 2009. The doves did not accept this decision and boycotted the session, which was supposed to elect Zaki bin Irshaid. However, Zaki bin Irshaid withdrew his nomination and Hamam Said disclosed that a

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[32] "*Jordan's Islamic Action Front picks up new leadership"*, 1 June, 2009. [Online:] http://www.ikhwanweb.com/Article.asp?ID=20288&SectionID=70 (accessed 10 June 2009)

[33] "Interview with Jordan's King Abdullah II." *The Wall Street Journal*, April 5 2010. Online: http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304017404575165993793337612.html (accessed 5 June 2010).

kind of reconciliation had started within the movement. The global leadership of the movement from Egypt visited Amman to arrange a settlement of the dispute. The doves did not nominate a new person for the position, leaving the job open to the doves, who nominated several candidates. On 26th June, in a meeting of the Party's council, Hamzah Mansour was elected the General Secretary. The election of Hamzah Mansour – a member of the moderate fraction – is a compromise between the doves and the hawks.

The hawks prefer election boycott, while the doves prioritize participation. The executive director of the IAF issued an announcement before the beginning of the registration process calling the members to register themselves for the upcoming elections, but it does not mean participation. The probability of a boycott of the next elections was very high, especially after the King endorsed the new election law. The election law keeps the "one man, one system", which is politically unacceptable for the Islamists. In 2010, Islamists started a discussion with secular parties about the election law and a joint boycott of the next election to draw the attention of the international community to the oppressive nature of the regime. According to the polls conducted by the Centre of Strategic Studies, the popularity of the IAF is very low, much less than 10% among voters. Finally, IAF called for a boycott of the elections, which was held in November 2010. In 2011, IAF accepted a new strategic document for enlarging the members of the party, which was estimated around 3000 by experts.

The generalization of the Jordanian model is not possible because of the unique historical context and political circumstances. The Islamic Action Front Party is a popular, but politically marginalized movement. The example of the Islamic Action Party shows that legalized Islamist parties are not inevitable winners of general elections in the Middle East, and they can be co-opted by the autocratic (or semi-democratic) regime successfully. However, the future of the Islamists' participation in politics of the Kingdom is still an open question. Post-Islamism is not a strong force in Jordan (as in Egypt), it is a rather marginalized fraction cooperating with the regime, and (classical) Islamism has also lost popularity in recent years.

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