

A Turbulent Decade between the Jordanian Government and the Muslim Brotherhood*

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Introduction

Despite the retreat of *Arab Nationalism* (qawmīya), the Arab identity still has an important political role in Arab society. Islamic movements since the late 20th century had a profound impacts on Arab individuals. In particular, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, a small monarchy located among the regional hegemonies contains a multitude of regional identities. The six-decade history of Jordanian politics can be described as the “politics of survival” mainly because the Kingdom’s monarchy has barely endured regional conflicts and economic crises [Lucas 2005].¹ Ironically, external and internal crises in neighboring states empowered the monarchy to become a unique “buffer state” among the warring nations, and made Jordan one of the key actors in the peace process after the 1991 Gulf War [Muasher 2008: Ch. 1].

King ‘Abd Allāh (‘Abd Allāh ibn Ḥusayn ibn Ṭalāl), who inherited the political legacy of Jordan in 1999, has attempted to maximize the Jordanian identity through a series of nationalism initiatives.² Despite the King’s effort to promote nationalism and to tighten domestic security during the crises in neighboring countries (namely, the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the Gaza Crisis that began in 2008), the Amman Bombings in November 2005, which killed 60 Jordanian citizens tarnished Jordan’s image as a safe country. The landslide victory of the Islamic group HAMAS (Ḥaraka al-Muqāwama al-Islāmīya) in the January 2006 Palestinian Elections also impacted Jordan because of its large Palestinian population.

Against this background, among the neighbor states, Palestine has a significant influence in Jordanian society. Thus many domestic social forces view Palestine as one of Jordan’s indispensable partners. Perhaps best representative of these forces is the Muslim Brotherhood (MB: Jamā‘a al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn), the largest Islamic organization in the monarchy.³

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1 The Fund for Peace’s “Failed States Index” clearly shows the structural obstacles in Jordan, namely “internally displaced persons creating complex humanitarian emergencies” and “uneven economic development along group lines.” <http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=452&Itemid=900> accessed on September 3, 2010.

2 Since 1999, King ‘Abd Allāh has tried to maximize assimilating social forces into legitimate institutions, namely the legislative body and political parties, reaffirming national unity and seeking economic development. For details, see [Kikkawa 2010].

3 In regard to the other face of the Jordanian Islamic movements such as Jihadists, *Salafiya* movements,

Furthermore, the MB's political wing, the Islamic Action Front Party (IAF: *Ḥizb Jabha al-‘Amal al-Islāmī*) openly criticized the Jordanian government's Israeli appeasement policy toward.

This study analyzes the impact of “external factors” on Jordan's domestic politics, focusing on the troubled relationship between the government and the MB caused by the June 2006 death of a Jordanian, internationally known as “Abū Muṣ‘ab al-Zarqāwī.” In the “Zarqāwī affairs,” the IAF led a radical movement that challenged the government's rule. Second, this study analyzes the influence of external factors in the MB's activities in legislative politics after the 2007 national elections.

I. The Monarchy: State Structure and Source of Power

Jordan can be roughly classified as a monarchical-authoritarian state or a *neopatrimonial polity* that forms clientelist sociopolitical networks, similar to Kuwait and Morocco [Bank and Schlumberger 2004: 35–36]. It is noteworthy that Jordan's geopolitical importance as a bridge between the Arabs and the others has allowed the Hashemite monarchs to “solicit significant economic, political, and military external support” [Dessouki and Abul Kheir 2008: 253]. Paradoxically, the tension among the regional hegemonies (Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Israel) for regional preeminence over the years became a major national resource of Jordan.

On the other hand, external crises have often caused Jordan's domestic-political reform and corruption. For instance, external crises and the strong need for political manipulation of the monarchy promoted limited democratization in the 1980s. Political liberalization in 1989 was triggered by two external factors: (1) structural change; former King Ḥusayn (Ḥusayn ibn Talāl) decided to sever the ties to the West Bank in July 1988; (2) financial crisis; with the end of oil boom in the Gulf states, Jordan's rentier economy gradually descended into a deep crisis [Bouillon 2002: 4]; further, Jordan's 1988 disengagement decision made Palestinian capital begin a flight out of Jordan [Lucas 2005: 25]; Jordan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreed on a Structural Adjustment Program, which forced the removal of subsidies on food and oil, and incited the April 1989 riots.

Because of its decades-long experience with these crises, the monarchy was able to construct a well-organized and tenacious government system and a security network to secure order. In fact, the monarchy's stability is greatly due to its successful strategies for survival, particularly the manipulation of institutional rules in three venues: political parties, the parliament, and the press [Lucas 2005: 7].

1. Executive Powers – King and Cabinet

The King is formally and materially the ruler of Jordan. The King is “the head of the state and is immune from any liability and responsibility” [The 1952 Constitution: Article 30].

and MB spin-off, see [Abu Rumman 2007] and [Wictrowicz 2001].

Executive powers “shall be vested in the King, who shall exercise his powers through his ministers in accordance with the provisions of the present constitution” [The 1952 Constitution: Article 26]. The King appoints the Prime Minister and can dismiss or accept the minister’s resignation. Although the Prime Minister is given official power to appoint other ministers, the King can reverse his decision [Kikkawa 2007].

Presently, Jordan’s Prime Ministers do not have as strong of an influence as they had in the 1950s, during the power struggle between loyalists and Arab nationalists. However, they still have a large amount of responsibility to both the King and parliament, but particularly to the former. Therefore, a “habitual” tendency in the government has been observable since the era of the former King Ḥusayn. This period witnessed—a frequent changes of Prime Minister and reshuffling of the cabinet (the Council of Ministers). King ‘Abd Allāh also reshuffles the cabinet annually or biannually, based on the monarchy’s urgent tasks. The processes of government appointment and reshuffling progress very smoothly: in a Royal Appointment Letter, the King informs the new Prime Minister of the “the most urgent task” for the new cabinet and presents his profound gratitude to the former cabinet.⁴ In other words, Prime Ministers in Jordan often act “as a buffer, allowing the crown to remain above power” [Dessouki and Abul-Kheir 2008: 261].

External factors can often be the reason for cabinet reshuffling. One example is the request that a senior MP Abū al-Rāghib (‘Alī Ḥusayn Muḥammad Abū al-Rāghib) reform his cabinet three times from 2000 to 2003 in response to the Palestinian-Israeli conflicts. Abū al-Rāghib’s cabinet issued many “provisional laws” (qawānīn muwaqqata) to tighten domestic security. After securing order in the country, the cabinet immediately resigned [Kikkawa 2009]. The King recently asked the former Prime Minister and Director of National Security Ma’rūf al-Bakhīt to form a new government, in response to domestic reform pressure triggered by the Tunisia’s Jasmine Revolutions.⁵

2. Legislative Power – Upper House and Lower House

Legislative power is vested in the parliament and the King [The 1952 Constitution: Article 25]. The parliament (majlis al-umma) consists of two houses, the Upper House (majlis al-a’yān) and the Lower House (majlis al-nuwwāb). The Upper House is supposedly an advisory council: all MPs or former VIPs (a’yān) should be present, namely, ministers, MPs, judges, retired military officers, and other prominent people. The King appoints all Senators, making the Upper House a stronghold of loyalist VIPs [Kikkawa 2007].

4 The copies of those letters are available at Jordan’s Prime Ministry Homepage <<http://www.pm.gov.jo/arabic/>> accessed on December 20, 2010.

5 In October 2011, the King has replaced al-Bakhīt, with a former judge of the International Court of Justice ‘Awn al-Khaṣāwneh, in response to growing domestic pressure to accelerate political reform [Kikkawa 2011].

On the other hand, Lower House MPs are elected by secret ballot in a general direct election. The Lower House elects its Speaker and can also cast a vote of “no confidence” in the Council of Ministers. However, the Jordanian Cabinet is superior to the Lower House because of the Cabinet occasionally having legislative power. In cases where the Lower House is not gathered or is dissolved, the Cabinet has, with the King’s approval, the power to issue Provisional Laws for “necessary measures that admit no delay or that necessitate expenditures incapable of postponement” [The 1952 Constitution: Article 94-1]. Hence, the Cabinet should have temporal-legislative power whenever the Lower House is dissolved.

Lust-Okar argues that there are two fundamental distinctions among oppositions to participate in the formal political sphere of the Arab states; undivided and divided structures of contestation. The rulers (incumbents) can “create institutions that either include or exclude opposition groups uniformly (undivided structures of contestation), or they can include some opposition groups while excluding others (divided structures of contestation)” [Lust-Okar 2007: 39–40]. Thus different structures of contestation create divergent protest dynamics. In Jordan’s undivided structure of contestation, the oppositions (namely, the Islamists and Leftists who are critical of the monarchy’s pro-Western diplomacy and neoliberal economic policy) continuously mobilize; legal opponents do not fear the inclusion of radicals, and even when “important divisions exist between legal opposition groups, those groups who challenge the regime do not pay a higher price if other legal opponents join in the unrest; thus both groups remain willing to challenge the regime.” [Lust-Okar 2007: 42]

II. History of the State – MB Relations in Jordan

1. Islamists in Jordanian Politics

The Jordanian MB was established in 1945 as a branch of the original Muslim Brotherhood Movement born in Egypt.⁶ Unlike the Egyptian MB, the Jordanian MB was immediately legalized at home because King ‘Abd Allāh (‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥusayn), a founder of the Hashemite Kingdom wanted to empower the conservative Islamic organization and make it one of the pillars of the young monarchy [Boulby 1998; Wilson 1987]. Because of its advantage as the vanguard of Islam, the Jordanian MB became the biggest social organization and an indispensable part of the monarchy as *fayṣal hāshimī* (sword of Hashemite). Further, the MB has often defended the monarchs against the Arab nationalists [El-Said 1995].

The MB has averted violent conflict with the government. According to Khazendar, the MB did not seek to replace the monarchy with an Islamic one because the MB regarded the monarchy as a better alternative to the other political systems namely, the Leftists and Arab Nationalists who dominated other Arab states. In addition, the government found the MB’s

⁶ For the early history of the Egyptian MB, see [Lia 1998]. For international MB network, see for example, [Rubin 2010].

nonviolent approach acceptable, and any action by it to eliminate the MB would have left it in a political vacuum [Khazendar 1997: 146–147]. The MB expanded its influence in Jordanian society, particularly in education and community work, by establishing the Islamic Center Society (ICS: Jam‘īyāt al-Markaz al-Islāmīya) in 1963. For the MB, ICS was a gateway into civil society that enabled it to develop a nationwide social work network. Targeting the middle class, ICS ran colleges, hospitals, nursery schools, youth centers and charity associations.⁷ All ICS executives were appointed by the MB, making the MB a major competitor of all major state-run social organizations [Clark 2004: Ch. 3].

For social and economic issues, the MB generally favors “big government.” The IAF also stressed the increase of social expenditure in its manifesto for the 2007 elections [IAF 2007]. Recently, the MB criticized the government’s neo-liberal economic policies in response to the global financial crisis, claiming that they generated further crises such as the public sector’s privatization and a lack of fluidity of the labor market [*Al-Sabīl* 2010 (Aug. 26)].

The MB has also occasionally clashed with the government on regional issues. Although the MB was a “Jordanian” organization, it was also a transnational movement in Arab—Islamic society. The arrest of the MB General Supervisor (murāqib al-‘āmm) in 1958 because of his criticism of the Baghdad Pact is an example of this dual existence [Gharāyiba 1997: 67]. To the MB, occupied Palestine must be Islamic because it holds *ḥaram sharīf*, the third most sacred place in Islam. In MB’s slogan, “filasṭīn islāmīya” (Islamic Palestine) is Jordan’s greatest wish. For this reason, the MB criticized Jordan’s 1988 disengagement from the West Bank [Khazendar 1997: 157]. Notwithstanding, prior to the 1989 elections, the MB leaders were “often further rewarded for their loyalty and cooperation with inclusion in various government ministries, particularly in the Ministry of Education and Awqaf” [Clark 2004: 87].

2. Brothers in the Lower House

Since the Six-Day War in 1967, the MB’s influence in legislative politics has been limited because of the suspension of the function of the Lower House. As King Ḥusayn gradually opened the political sphere during the 1980s, the MB successfully contested several by and local elections. The 1989 elections, the first national elections since 1967, was a turning point for the MB. Because of its special status as the largest organization in Jordan, the MB easily secured 24 of 80 seats in the new Lower House. The electoral law of that time allowed voters to “vote for as many candidates as there were seats in his or her district” [Baaklini et al. 1999: 156]. This system helped the MB because many voters favored MB candidates as second or

⁷ Clark explains the benefit of targeting the middle class; first, ICS not only raised donations among different social sectors but also constructed a wide class-crossing network, which was not disconnected from the MB movement. Secondly, this ICS network would be of benefit to these middle class donors [Clark 2004: 96–107]. Moreover, financial support from the “religious” Jordanian migrant workers in the Gulf Arab states helped the MB’s Islamic charity work [Abu Rumman 2007: 20].

third choice in their constituencies.

During the Gulf Crisis, many social forces in Jordan opposed to the U.S. led a buildup against Ṣaddām Ḥusayn (Ṣaddām Ḥusayn Majīd). Thus, the new Jordanian Lower House became “the rally point for condemnation of the Western coalition” [Baaklini et al. 1999: 152]. Against this background, King Ḥusayn allowed the MB and other domestic social forces to express themselves both in the Lower House and in the streets. Further, in January 1991, the monarchy invited the MB to join the national government, resulting in seven MB members being appointed ministers [El-Said 1995: 13; Gharāyiba 1997: 74].

The Gulf Crisis caused systematic changes in the region, namely, the U.S. military presence in the Gulf, and Israel’s stability as a regional hegemony. This led King Ḥusayn to completely change his diplomatic policy. Shortly thereafter, it became clear that the newly appointed cabinet led by Ṭāhir al-Maṣrī reconciled to having a relationship with the U.S., and supported the foreign country’s efforts to promote peace between Arabs and Israelis. Thus, the Jordanian – Israeli Peace Process drove a wedge between the government and the MB.

King Ḥusayn empowered the Lower House to become more assertive because of the King’s “need for an institution that could act as a safety valve for the expression of public discontent” [Baaklini et al. 1999: 154]. The National Charter, which was drafted by the sixty-members commissioned by the monarchy, including the MB and Arab Nationalists, was ratified in 1991. The 1967 establishment of martial law was abolished, and a new political party law allowing any party except extremists to organize and contest national elections was instituted [Kikkawa 2007].

In 1992, the MB formed a new party, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), to contest multiparty elections. The IAF is allegedly an independent party, but most of its members belong to the MB. For example, the majority of the IAF founding committee was from the MB [Kilani et al. 1993: 26]. Similar to the MB, the IAF is a platform of several social sectors, particularly Islamist intellectuals, and elite professionals who belong to professional associations (al-Niqāba al-Mihnīya) [Kikkawa 2007]. Once, Jordanian professional associations were a political stronghold of the middle class that enjoyed a high professional structure, and also constituted a façade for the political sphere under the martial law [Ḥūrānī 2000].⁸ This background made the IAF’s policy two faceted, i.e., — not only was it a conservative Islamist group following the MB’s guidelines, but it was also as a kind of Social Democratic group in favor of labor unions.

The monarchy’s inclusion policy in the Lower House provided the MB with a new way to participate. Schwedler carefully delineated the effectiveness of the “inclusion-moderation

⁸ Among those professional associations, the Teachers Association (niqāba al-mu‘allimīn) has been a vanguard of the MB-IAF supporters, as the association lacked the state’s protection. Thus, the MB’s position on public education is close to the association. For example, the MB general supervisor occasionally criticized the government for suppressing teachers on their demands [*Al-Sabīl* 2010 (Aug. 26)].

hypothesis” in Jordan, examining the case of the IAF. A series of inclusion policies in Jordan relocated the MB and the IAF in a broader context and made them more moderate [Schwedler 2006]. In fact, although the IAF shares transnational ideas with the MB, namely, Islam, Arab solidarity, and an independent Palestine, the party emphasizes that it is a Jordanian political party. When the IAF was formed, it pledged to seek the national unity of Jordan and to support the sovereignty of the Hashemite monarchs [Kilani et al. 1993].

The IAF has two important functions: the Shūrā council (majlis al-shūrā) as a legislative body, and the executive bureau (al-maktab al-tanfīdhīya) as an administrative body. The Shūrā council comprises 120 representatives chosen by a nation-wide secret ballot. The Shūrā council has the authority to choose a Chairperson of the Council (raʿīs majlis al-shūrā), and the party’s Secretary General (al-amīn al-‘āmm).

For the IAF, Israel should be considered as a “Zionist enemy,” and not as a sovereign state. Thus, it was ironic that the party was born while the government was attempting to make peace with Israel.

3. After Normalization

Under the pressure to reconcile democratization and peace with Israel, King Ḥusayn chose to slow down political reform. In August 1993, the King dissolved the Lower House, a little before the end of its term. The government also issued an amendment to the electoral law and introduced a provisional single-vote system (qānūn al-ṣawṭ wāḥid), instead of the multiple voting system. The new system was expected to “reduce support for ideological political parties, and increase that for candidates from regime loyalists” [Ashton 2008: 301]. Pro-government independents (those that are non-party affiliated) won the elections by a large majority. To a large extent many parties suffered from the new trend, clientelism. Many voters, particularly those who live in rural areas, preferred persons of good reputation to party-affiliated candidates. The IAF managed to garner 16 of 80 seats, the largest number among all the parties and the oppositions lost almost all their seats.

This opened the path for the government to negotiate peace with Israel without a veto from the Lower House and in October 1994, the government signed the Wadi Araba Treaty with Israel. The treaty was ratified by a comfortable 55 to 24 vote in the Lower House, although the MPs from the IAF denounced it as unrepresentative of Jordanian will [Baaklini et al. 1999: 160]. Then, the relation between the government and the MB and the IAF was “no longer one of close and cordial relations, but one of silent and sometimes declared apathy, even if these relations continued to be governed by certain rules that precluded such contradictions from turning into a relationship of animosity or breakdown” [Hourani 1997: 274].

Quarrels between the pro- and anti normalization lobbies continued during 1996 and 1997. The government attempted to frustrate the expression of anti-normalization sentiments

in a series of provisional laws, particularly the May 1997 amendment of the Press and Publications Law, which banned 13 weekly newspapers [Ashton 2008: 334]. MPs from the IAF experienced two splits over the normalization: one was discordance with the government, while the other was with Islamists desiring participation in the Lower House [Hourani 1997: 272]. Ten weeks before 1997 elections, the MB, but not the IAF, announced the IAF's boycott of the elections. The MB and the IAF's boycott cast doubt on the viability of democratization in Jordan and left the monarchy without its largest supporting political party. The MB's decision was also embarrassing for the IAF leadership, which had "made its own decision to participate in the election and was preparing itself for it through the meetings its local organizations were holding" [Hourani 1997: 279]. The boycott was a symbolic event that publicly disclosed subtle and strategic balance of power within the MB network.

However, the boycott resulted in the IAF paying a high price; it lost its sole powerbase in Jordanian politics. The pro-government independents dominated the Lower House. In addition, regional crises in Palestine and Iraq once again hit Jordanian politics. New King 'Abd Allāh gave priority to domestic issues. Whenever the King ascended the throne in 1999, the government set a clear rule that Jordan would not be one of the key actors in the West Bank power struggle, by expelling the HAMAS leaders from Jordan. Following the "al-Aqsa Intifada (Intifāda al-Aqṣā 2000)" in Palestine, the government tightened its grip on domestic security through several provisional laws. Concerned about pro-Palestinian sentiments in Jordan, the King postponed the November 2001 elections and did so again in 2002 in response to the situation in Iraq as well as to Intifāda [Kikkawa 2007].

Finally the IAF decided to return to legislative politics. In June 2003, it joined the long-awaited Lower House elections. Although the timing of the elections was critical, — happening only a month after the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the elections were held without significant trouble because of the previously implemented provisional laws and the government's campaign for national unity. Pro-government independents secured two-thirds of the new Lower House [*Al-Ra'y* 2003 (June 19)] and the IAF acquired 13 seats. After the elections, IAF leaders admitted that many of its candidates could not secure their victories in rural areas [Kikkawa 2007]. Many voters in those areas suffered from stagnation and low incomes, and favored candidates who might bring more jobs and development. According to a poll by the Center of Strategic Studies at University of Jordan (CSS), 58% of the respondents chose "poverty and joblessness" as the most important problems to be solved in the question concerning "citizen's priority" [CSS 2003].

The IAF, still the largest political party in Jordan but a minority in the new Lower House returned to its original pledge, attacking Israel's "plot" against the Arab-Islam world and criticizing the government's "undemocratic" policy. Also the MB, once an indispensable part of the monarchy had difficulty changing its policy to reconcile with the government because

of the big rifts between them, — namely, the normalization of relations with Israel and the future of Palestine. The MB and the IAF are opposed to any negotiations with “Zionist enemy (Israel).” [*Al-Sabīl* 2010 (Aug. 30)]

III. Case Studies: Recent State-MB Relations

In 2006, an incident referred to here as the “Zarqāwī affairs” caused a serious deterioration in relations between the government and the IAF. The antagonism over the Zarqāwī affairs also exposed widespread ideological discontent between “the doves and the hawks in the MB network. Disharmony among the MB-IAF leaders is easily found in the process of the 2007 elections and their personnel affairs in recent years.

Case 1: Zarqāwī Affairs

Abū Muṣ‘ab al-Zarqāwī (alias, Aḥmad Fādīl al-Nazāl al-Khalāyleh), a leader of Iraq based al-Qā‘ida, is a “Jordanian-Jordanian” born in Zarqā.⁹ In June 2006, he was killed by a U.S. air raid in Iraq. Zarqāwī’s real life remains mostly a mystery, and his political reputation is extremely controversial among Jordanians. To the Jordanian government, Zarqāwī was one of the culprits responsible for the November 2005 Amman Bombings that killed 60 people and injured hundreds others. On the other hand, for some Zarqāwī was a shahīd (martyr) who dedicated his life for the war against the U.S. forces in Iraq.¹⁰

The beginning of the affair was when four IAF MPs’ expressed condolences for the slain Zarqāwī in early June 2006. Soon after their condolences, these MPs, Muḥammad Abū Fāris (5th District of Amman), ‘Alī Abū Sukkar (2nd District of Zarqā), Ibrāhīm al-Mashūkhī (1st District of Zarqā), and Ja‘far Hūrānī (4th District of Zarqā), were charged with praising the terrorist (al-Irhābī) Zarqāwī as a martyr and holy warrior (mujāhid). They were remanded in custody for several weeks [Kikkawa 2009].

On June 30, the Lower House Speaker Majālī (‘Abd al-Ḥajj al-Majālī) issued a statement asking the four MPs to apologize to the nation. However, the IAF Secretary General Banī Arshīd (Zakī Sa‘d Banī Arshīd) denied the request [*Al-Ra‘y* 2008 (June 30)].” On July 11, there was the first summit between the government and the MB was held. Attendants of the closed meeting from the government included Prime Minister Bakhīt (Ma‘rūf Bakhīt), Interior Minister Fāyiz (Fayṣal ‘Ākif al-Fāyiz), Director of General Intelligence Agency Dhahabī (Muḥammad al-Dhahabī), and Government Spokesperson Judat (Muḥammad Nāṣir

⁹ Jordanian-Jordanians in addition to Bedouin and Circassian enjoy a high social status as the founder of the monarchy. On the other hand, Palestinian Jordanians are still in humble positions in the government and in the public sector because of their refugee origins. However, Palestinian Jordanians are becoming the most rapidly emerging group in the private sector.

¹⁰ According to a poll by CSS in 2006, the popularity of Zarqāwī’s group as “legitimate resistance movement” declined sharply after the Amman Bombings [CSS 2006].

Sāmī Ḥasan Judat). Attendants from the MB side included General Supervisor Falāḥāt (Sālim al-Falāḥāt) and other IAF leaders (undisclosed) [*Al-Ra'y* 2006 (July 12)]. They reportedly discussed “national unity” and the “opposition to Islamic radicalism” [*Jordan News Agency* 2006 (July 11)]. Soon after, the prosecutor released MP al-Mashūkhī, as not guilty [*Jordan Times* 2006 (July 19)]. The other three were transferred to the National Security Court (Maḥkama Amn al-Dawla), a special court for national security issues.

The trial for the Zarqāwī affairs continued even after Israel’s invasion of Lebanon on July 12. The prosecutor found new evidence that both MP Abū Fāris and MP Abū Sukkar spoke of Zarqāwī as a martyr, and that MP Ḥūrānī did not do so. Moreover, Abū Fāris and Abū Sukkar praised Zarqāwī in the interview with *al-‘Arabīya*, an Arabic satellites channel [*Jordan Times* 2008 (July 25; July 26)].¹¹ On August 6, the judge of the State Security Court ordered that Abū Fāris be imprisoned for two years and Abū Sukkar for 18 months on charges of “incitement to disagreement and hostilities in the element of society” [*Al-Ra'y* 2006 (Aug. 7)]. However, the court also lifted the punishment for MP Ḥūrānī’s incrimination [*Al-Ra'y* 2006 (Aug. 7)].

The special session of the Lower House began on August 16 amidst the political turmoil—the Lebanese war outside and the Zarqāwī Affairs inside Jordan’s border. Originally, the special session’s focal point was to be the bills on the National Agenda 2006–2015.¹² However, a series of security threats delivered since the Amman Bombings, made the bills about anti-terrorism and security enforcement dominate the session [*Jordan Times* 2006 (Aug. 28)].¹³

On September 30, after a long silence, the King suddenly granted a “Special King Amnesty” (‘afw malakī khāṣṣ) to the two MPs. Unlike a “General Amnesty” (‘afw ‘āmm), a Special King Amnesty only lifts custody, not conviction. Thus, although they were released, they were still guilty and their MP status forfeited [*Al-Ra'y* 2006 (Sep. 30–Oct. 1)]. On

11 It is noteworthy that both MPs have the typical careers as of IAF elite—an Islamic scholar and a business person. MP Abū Fāris studied shari’a at Damascus University, then he received a Ph. D. at al-Azhar University. He served as Dean of Shari’a Department at the University of Jordan (IAF Homepage <http://www.jabha.net/n_6.asp> accessed on September 20, 2008. See also [Hourani et al. 2004: 129]. Further, according to Abu Rumman, Abū Fāris was one of the leading figures of student movements in the 1980s [Abu Rumman 2007: 21]. MP Abū Sukkar studied engineering at Baghdad University. He owns a construction company. And he served as the Secretary General of Jordanian Engineer Association from 1995–2003, a member of the MB Shūrā Council (IAF Homepage <http://www.jabha.net/n_11.asp> accessed on September 20, 2008. See also [Hourani et al. 2004: 142].

12 The National Agenda 2006–2015 is a political-economic program that aims to put Jordan on a trajectory of economic growth and one that simultaneously assimilates citizens under the banner of the monarchy.

13 On the other hand, the government openly defended the MB when the organization was included as Russian Supreme Court’s “list of 17 terrorist organizations” in August. Government Spokesperson Juda said the MB was a legitimate movement that was “a genuine part of national political life that exercises opposition policies in a responsible way and through its deputies in the Lower House” [*Jordan Times* 2006 (Aug. 25)]. This episode clearly shows the government still sees the MB an important organization as a vanguard of moderate Islamic movements in Jordan.

October 16, the MB General Supervisor Falāḥāt praised the King's decision on the special amnesty at the MB's *iftāl* gathering [*Al-Ra'y* 2006 (Oct. 17; Oct. 23)]. On the other hand, MPs of the IAF requested that the Lower House Speaker Majālī give the former MP Abū Fāris and Abū Sukkar's seats to them [*Jordan Times* 2006 (Nov. 30)]. With the amnesty, the Zarqāwī Affairs were officially closed.

External Factors behind The Crisis

What caused the Zarqāwī Affairs? The four MPs' condolences were only the precipitating cause that crossed a point of no return, allowing the government's intervention. Tensions caused by external factors were the deep causes of the Affairs. Since the rule of King 'Abd Allāh, the government has attempted to eliminate calamities caused by external factors (namely, the Arab identity and Palestinian identity) and promote nationalism. Ironically, Iraqi factors in Jordan such as Zarqāwī's organization and the Amman Bombings were the impetus for the government's security enforcement. That is why the King unprecedentedly criticized the MPs involved in the affair:

I don't think there should be any tolerance to people that incite and support terrorism in any form, and I think this is not just a snapshot for Jordan, I think this is a snapshot for the international community. If people are actively supporting and encouraging terrorism, then they are on the other side of the fence. [*Der Spiegel* 2006 (June 19)]

The landslide victory of HAMAS in the January 2006 Palestinian Elections also caused the government to fear that the radicalization of Jordanian Islamists. To make matters worse, some IAF leaders sent wrong signals to the government. Banī Arshīd, a Palestinian Jordanian appointed as the new IAF Secretary General in March 2006 was known as a strong HAMAS supporter. Coincidentally, in May 2006, the government announced that it had discovered a cache of weapons belonging to HAMAS in northern Jordan [Shenker 2006]. This was caused by IAF leaders' hard-line policy to make the government fear the IAF as being a more power-seeking political actor, similar to HAMAS.

Case 2: Election Strategies

The IAF continued its hard-line policy. Neither the government nor the IAF hid their antagonism in the July 2007 municipal elections.¹⁴ The IAF had 33 candidates immediately pull out of the elections during the voting process because there were questions of vote-

¹⁴ The meaning of the elections was important, as it was the first time that local mayors could be elected by citizens outside of Amman instead of appointed by the King. Local voters could also elect the entire municipal council—previously half the members were appointed by the King.

rigging initiated by the government [Abu Rumman 2007: 27]. The IAF criticized the government for deploying soldiers in contested districts with the aim of casting multiple ballots [*New York Times* 2007 (Aug. 1)]. Although the IAF hinted it might boycott the 2007 elections scheduled on November 20, it ultimately decided to participate [*Jordan Times* 2007 (Aug. 1)].

In contrast to the visible tension with the government, the IAF's manifesto designed for the 2007–2011 fiscal year was not sensational. Their core argument can be summarized as follows: (1) political reform; for example, the “wrong electoral system” should be amended; this attacked the single-voting system and stated that the IAF backed a return to the multiple-voting system in effect prior to 1993 (2) implementation of Islamic ideas in the Jordanian society; for example, abolishing interest charges; (3) diplomacy and foreign affairs; specifically, as the manifesto called for “the Arab-Islamic societies’ unified action against the invaders” (i.e., Israel and the US) [IAF 2007].

Individual candidates once again swept the election, taking 98 of 110 seats. The result was devastating for the IAF, whose number of seats dropped to six. The IAF was unable to win nationwide seats even in Zarqā and Irbid, which are known as the party's strongholds areas. The IAF accused the government of orchestrating a vote transfer. In a press conference after the elections, the IAF leaders explained that the poor results were caused by the government “leading a smear campaign to minimize the chances of its candidates by facilitating vote buying by influential businessman” [*Jordan Times* 2007 (Nov. 22)].

Abu Rumman explains that the IAF's retreat was also caused by the power struggles between the doves and the hawks in the MB network. For example, the MB election committee did not approve the candidacy of ‘Alī al-Utūm, a popular MB member in Irbid, despite his nomination by the MB branch in Irbid had because the MB leaders in the “moderates” and “doves” excluded politically controversial yet popular figures such as al-Utūm from the candidate list [Abu Rumman 2007: 57–68].

Further, it should be noted that the IAF's policy did not gain public support, instead only finding support through MB affiliates. One example is in the IAF's manifesto for the 2007 elections, which spent a great deal of time discussing regional issues and diplomacy, which constituted 30% of the manifesto, and political reforms and state-Islam relations for 55% of the manifesto [IAF 2007]. The problem was that this focus was contradictory to the greatest issue in Jordan: —stagflation and unemployment, particularly in rural areas.¹⁵ Moreover, we should not dismiss the new trend—of emerging non-MB Islamists in Jordan. During and after the Zarqāwī Affairs, the government empowered Islamic organizations under the state authority and amended several laws related to Islam in favor of the government.

¹⁵ The CSS poll in 2003 clearly shows most Jordanians, concern is “unemployment” and “poverty.” [CSS 2003]

Simultaneously, the government mutilated the IAF by closing the ICS, a machine of the IAF's election strategy. The government also supported independent non-MB Islamists in the 2007 elections [Abu Rumman 2007: 69–70].

After the 2007 elections, there were big shakeups in the MB network. In May 2008, a hawk Dr. Hamām Sa‘īd al-‘Abd, was chosen as the MB General Supervisor through secret voting by the MB Shūrā members [*Jordan Times* 2008 (May 4)]. On the other hand, a dove, ‘Abd al-Laṭīf ‘Arabīyāt, took the post of the Chairperson of the MB Shūrā Council.¹⁶ It is noteworthy that the former MB General Supervisor Dr. ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Dhunaybāt, a prominent pragmatist figure in MB history, was nominated as a senator. These happenings were signals that the government would not eradicate its ties with the MB.

In the beginning of 2009, the MB and the IAF temporarily saw the light at the end of the tunnel. The government did not intervene in the mass rallies and demonstrations organized by the MB during the Gaza Crisis, which lasted from December 27, 2008 to January 21, 2009. When thousands of organized protesters marched through Amman, even approaching the Israeli Embassy, they were not stopped by security. In February 2009, the government also allowed the once-suspended MB newspaper *Al-Sabīl* to be published again, even though it continuously criticized the government.

The 2010 Elections

The political atmosphere in 2010 was similar to that in 1997. There was no prospect of compromise between the government and the MB. In July 2010, the MB announced that it would boycott the upcoming elections scheduled for early November. The IAF also confirmed its boycott of the elections, following the resolution in its Shūrā Council leaving 73% of the votes against participation [*Al-Sabīl* 2010 (July 31)]. The IAF formed a coalition with the Popular Unity (al-Waḥda al-Sha‘bīya), and launched a campaign to collect signatures for a boycott of the elections [*Al-Sabīl* 2010 (Sep. 6)]. The MB and the IAF could not reach an agreement with the government in an open-ended negotiation, which included a meeting with the Prime Minister Samīr al-Rīfā‘ī [*Al-Sabīl* 2010 (Sep. 17)]. Thus, in September, the MB Shūrā Council reconfirmed its boycott strategy [*Al-Sabīl* 2010 (Sep. 23)].

Perhaps the MB's boycott strategy was not a bad choice to avoid its further retreat in legislative politics. First, the MB still lacked pragmatic policies that grab voters' hearts. Similar to the 2007 elections, the biggest concern for the 2010 elections was the economy because the outgoing government's structural reforms had caused a threat to national unity changes instead of economic strengthening and revitalization policies [*Al-Ghad* 2010 (Nov. 8)]. During the

¹⁶ For the IAF, Banī Arshīd resigned as Secretary General. Ishaq Farḥān, one of the cofounders of the party took the post as the "Interim Secretary General" in 2009. Then Ḥamza Maṣṣūr, a prominent dove MP was elected. ‘Alī Abū Sukkar, though he lost his MP status as the result of the Zarqāwī Affairs, came back to the political scene soon. He took the chair of the Chairperson of the IAF Shūrā Council.

election campaign, the MB newspaper *Al-Sabīl* devoted a special section to the report on corruption, focusing on clientelism and violations of the election laws, such as vote buying [*Al-Sabīl* 2010 (Sep. 28–Oct. 6)]. Second, the internal friction in the MB network was far from over. Before the election, the MB and the IAF tightened internal regulations to continue the boycott strategy. For example, the MB dismissed five members who stood for the election campaign [*Al-Ghad* 2010 (Oct. 14)].¹⁷

The MB's boycott strategy was unsuccessful. According to the CSS opinion poll, only 12 percent of the respondents supported the calls for a boycott [CSS 2010]. And since the government took measures to ensure fair elections and encourage voting such as reducing vote transfer, promoting a visible vote-counting process, and providing an IT-friendly media center, the MB's boycott was further thwarted.

A Provisional Outlook

This study examined the impact of external factors in Jordanian politics, focusing on the troubled relations between the government and the MB. Two case studies show Jordan's sensitivity to external crises and its systemic transformation in the region. The Palestinian factor in Jordanian society would be the largest obstacle for both the government and domestic social forces to react to any incidents related to the region.

Externally, the MB and the IAF are free from any compromise surrounding the Wadi Araba Treaty, enjoying their advantage as the strongest opposition party and criticizing the government's appeasement policies toward Israel as betrayal. On the other hand, their deliberately ambiguous position of not only attacking actors who recognize Israel but also praising anti-Zionists led them into a political impasse. Rather, such MB populism created a negative trend, — the diversity of identities in the MB network. The MB became a nexus of the plural Jordanian society, representing not only Islamism but also Arab Nationalism and several Palestinian identities, which is why the MB's blueprints of Jordanian nationalism, namely their manifesto for the national elections, consist of multifarious interests among different Jordanians.

The precipitating cause of the Zarqāwī Affairs was the death of the controversial Jordanian Zarqāwī. However, most of the deep causes were external factors. Zarqāwī was one of the by-products of the regional conflicts, including the Iraq War. The still unresolved Amman Bombings in 2005 were an intermediate cause of the government's tough security measures on IAF members. The landslide victory of HAMAS encouraged some IAF leaders and made them believe in an illusory sense of power that could support an openly challenge of the government as the real power in Jordanian society. In this sense, the deepest cause of

17 The MB leaders' comparatively less criticism of the state intervention during the election campaign was an example. See reports in *Al-Sabīl* during the election campaign.

the crises in Jordan either of between the government and the IAF or among the MB society is still external factors, particularly occupied Palestine.

The following political deadlocks, which spoiled the IAF's potential to gain a majority in the Lower House could be summarized — as follows: (1) systemic cause; the anarchic nature of the region for six decades often tarnished the efforts of both the government and the IAF toward political reconciliation; (2) domestic cause; many voters feel that they suffer from economic stagnation and the income gap between rich and poor or between urban and rural areas, thus the abolition of a single vote system may not assure a future land-slide victory for the IAF; (3) identities; the several layered political identities in Jordanian society; (4) organization; the results of the 2007 and 2010 elections clearly show the limits of the MB as a political actor. Furthermore, there is a subtle balance of power within the MB network, as the IAF is gradually gaining a stronger voice. Additionally, the dichotomy among the MB members over the peace treaty is not yet solved.

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