

THE EXCEPTIONAL KINGDOM OF THE ARAB WORLD: THE EFFORTS OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF LOCAL ACTORS AND REGIONAL CHALLENGES

ARAP DÜNYASININ İSTİSNAİ KRALLIĞI:
YEREL AKTÖRLER VE ARAP-İSRAİL UYUŞMAZLIĞI
ÇERÇEVESİNDE ÜRDÜN KRALLIĞI'NIN
DEMOKRATİKLEŞME DENEYİMLERİ

ORTADOĞU STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES

مركز الشرق الأوسط للدراسات الاستراتيجية



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Report No: 90

November 2011

ISBN: 978-605-5330-82-8

Ankara - TURKEY ORSAM © 2011

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CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES

History

In Turkey, the shortage of research on the Middle East grew more conspicuous than ever during the early 90's. Center for Middle Eastern Strategic Studies (ORSAM) was established in January 1, 2009 in order to provide relevant information to the general public and to the foreign policy community. The institute underwent an intensive structuring process, beginning to concentrate exclusively on Middle affairs.

Outlook on the Middle Eastern World

It is certain that the Middle East harbors a variety of interconnected problems. However, neither the Middle East nor its people ought to be stigmatized by images with negative connotations. Given the strength of their populations, Middle Eastern states possess the potential to activate their inner dynamics in order to begin peaceful mobilizations for development. Respect for people's willingness to live together, respect for the sovereign right of states and respect for basic human rights and individual freedoms are the prerequisites for assuring peace and tranquility, both domestically and internationally. In this context, Turkey must continue to make constructive contributions to the establishment of regional stability and prosperity in its vicinity.

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ORSAM, provides the general public and decision-making organizations with enlightening information about international politics in order to promote a healthier understanding of international policy issues and to help them to adopt appropriate positions. In order to present effective solutions, ORSAM supports high quality research by intellectuals and researchers that are competent in a variety of disciplines. ORSAM's strong publishing capacity transmits meticulous analyses of regional developments and trends to the interested parties. With its web site, its books, reports, and periodicals, ORSAM supports the development of Middle Eastern literature on a national and international scale. ORSAM supports the development of Middle Eastern literature on a national and international scale. ORSAM facilitates the sharing of knowledge and ideas with the Turkish and international communities by inviting statesmen, bureaucrats, academics, strategists, businessmen, journalists, and NGO representatives to Turkey.

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Born in Nicosia in 1975, Koprulu received her master's and Phd degree at the Middle East Technical University (METU) in international relations, and afterwards, she started to work as a lecturer at the Cyprus International University in the Department of International Relations.

Specialized on the Arab world in general, and Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and political liberalization process in the region, in particular, Koprulu made a visit to Amman/Jordan in line with her research between 2006 and 2010. Visiting Amman so as to monitor the parliamentary elections held on November 9 in the country, Koprulu conducted various interviews with numerous eminent political figures and journalists and candidate parliamentarians before the elections.

Koprulu is still performing as a lecturer at the Cyprus International University in the Department of International Relations.

PRESENTATION

The social movements that began in Tunisia and spread to the Arab world demonstrated the need for the reconsideration of local and regional dynamics of the environment where we live. Spread after Tunisia to Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, Algeria, Syria, Libya and Jordan; the social movements signify that actors and internal dynamics in the region will be reshaped.

Started especially with an economic basis, the demonstrations, by questioning legitimacy of the regimes, went beyond being insurgencies that are spurred by increased economic problems, and they put the democratization demands of the Arab publics onto the agenda.

Having been to Jordan before so as to make a field research, Nur Koprulu made a visit to Amman as an observer on November 9, 2010 during which the parliamentary elections were held. In line with this goal, this very report is prepared with experiences of the author in Jordan during her trip and thanks to the literature review over Jordan. In the report, the experiences over democratization process in Jordan are analyzed with a careful consideration of Palestine issue and local actors.

Especially the endeavours of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to experience the wave of insurgencies over the Arab world with least impact reveal an answer to the reconsideration of the different stance of the Kingdom in the Arab Middle East, which is found to be of great importance and tried to be addressed in the report for the public opinion. We hope to meet our readers in new ORSAM reports.

Kindest regards,

Hasan Kanbolat
ORSAM Director

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Abstract

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has gone through a constant change during the identity and nation-building processes since 1946, when it gained its independence due to the Palestinian immigrants within the country. The fact that Jordan is the only Arab country enfranchising the Palestinians, who compose 70% of the population according to unofficial figures; and 43% of the population according to official figures, has brought the Kingdom to a key country position within the framework of Arab-Israel Conflict.

In addition to the enfranchising the Palestinian immigrants, upon the fact that the West Bank territories were annexed in 1950 by the Kingdom, and that the control of these territories (including East Jerusalem) were seized by Israel as a result of the Arab-Israeli War in 1967, not only were the Jordan's borders with Israel readjusted, but also the nation-building and democratization policies in the country had to be reformulated.

Upon the decision of the Kingdom in 1989 to recall the parliament, the elections started to be carried out again across the country after 22 years. The political parties, which had been disbanded since 1957, became legal again with the Political Parties Law, which entered into force in 1992. The most important development within this period is the fact that the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan) created Islamic Action Front (IAF), and that they gained an area in political arena and in the parliament.

While the IAF became the most organized political party in Jordan, where political and ideological organization is weak; the historical and traditional "partnership relation" between the Hashemite monarchy and Ikhwan started to go through a change following the treaty of peace between the Kingdom and Israel in 1994. While, for Ikhwan, this change is related to issues such as the policy followed to normalize the relations with Israel, and the "controversial" election law entered into force in 1993; for the regime, the aforesaid change is related to the Islamic organization, which found more field to act in the political area within the country compared to the previous periods. Because the democratization moves in the country reinforced the political parties – specifically the IAF – and they started to have an influence on the country's policy.

Especially after Al-Aqsa Intifada erupted, protest marches supporting the Palestinian national struggle were carried out across the country, and opposing views to normalize the relations with Israel were brought to the parliament.

The insurrection wave, which has influenced the Arab world in the recent period, has also been reflected on Jordan; and the King Abdullah II of Jordan unseated the PM Samir el-Rifai and appointed Marouf el-Bakhit as new Prime Minister. The point which makes Jordan different from the others within the framework of the developments in the region results from the fact that the protest marches, in which IAF also took part, do not have an anti-regime attitude; and that the monarchy was not questioned. In other words, the protests were organized by mentioning economic problems and political reform requests, rather than questioning the legitimacy of the Kingdom.

Preamble

With its political and social fabric entwisted birth with the Palestinian issue since the day it was established, and with its quality of being the most 'artificial' nation state among the Middle Eastern countries, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is one of the foremost countries influenced by the stalemate brought about by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian exodus and the change of boundaries experienced consequent to the Arab Israeli wars of 1948 and 1967 were extremely effective in the realization of the state's decisions particularly on the policy of identity, as well as external politics and democratization.¹ With the settling of approximately 700,000 Palestinian immigrants in Jordan after the war of 1948 – 1949, and with the Kingdom redrafting the Law of Citizenship in 1950, Jordan becomes the single Arab country to accord the right of citizenship to Palestinian immigrants.

The said law's update by King Abdallah I, and his efforts in integrating the Palestinian immigrants to the Jordanian society, played a vital role in establishing a sustainable political structure for the Kingdom that was established artificially by the colonial states due to the unfinished Arabian ideals of Abdallah I, as well as the regional uncertainty arising from the Palestinian issue.² This is precisely why the The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has taken on a dimension where its political existence is supported by the Western world as well as Israel, and where stability of the Hashemite regime is of extreme significance in the context of the policies to be pursued in the region.³

Within the present work, the aim is to analyze the local and regional dynamics that were influential in shaping the internal and external policies of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in the post-1989 era. In this context, nation and state building processes in the country have an important place; yet the 1989 deci-

sion by the Kingdom of giving up on land in the West Bank signals transition to a new era in the country concerning identity creation as well as the regional policy to be pursued.

Despite, steps – in addition to the above developments – taken in the country post-1989 towards democratization; with the attempt at normalization of relations with Israel, and with the start in year 2000 of the second Palestinian uprising – Al Aqsa *Intifada*, the said attempt of the Kingdom at democratization enters a stagnant period.

The social movements at the end of year 2010 echoed widely in the Arab World, also called the 'Arab Spring' were reflected in Jordan, whereby the political liberalization policies of the Hashemite Kingdom gained new velocity.

In accordance with its aim, the present report is made up of three principal parts; firstly shall be studied the post 1988-89 phase whereby the Jordanian Kingdom gave up its claims on Palestinian land (West Bank) and the following local and regional dynamics that increased the pace of the democratization movement; secondly, under the heading of principal regional developments, shall be put forth how the peace agreement signed with Israel, and the Palestinian uprising have shaped the democratization efforts in the country; in the final part shall be analyzed the significance of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) the biggest opposition movement of Jordan.

Processes of Nation & State Building in Jordan

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is one of the principal countries that have a special place in the Middle Eastern studies within the context of state and nation building processes. There are three principal reasons for this. Firstly, the land mass of the modern Jordan had been located on Palestinian soil during the Ottoman rule, and under the British Man-

date was established the Transjordan Emirate immediately after the first World War in 1921 on the Eastern Bank of the Jordanian River. As a case in point, Nazih Ayubi explains that the British took into consideration the need to create a 'corridor' entity during the building of the Jordanian Emirate.⁴ Gudrun Kramer even underlines the fact that, the Jordanian Emirate is one of the most 'artificial entities' established in the Arab World, and yet that its presence was strengthened over time.⁵

Secondly, after all these developments the process of nation-building of the Emirate (and later, that of the Jordanian Kingdom) that shared an interwoven history with the Palestinian Land, was quite influential in the state and particularly identity building efforts of the country. So much so that Jordanian Kingdom is one of the principal countries that were effected the most by the the Arab-Israel rupture. In the first instance, with the annexation of the Western Bank by the Kingdom in 1950, unification of the east and the west side of the River gave the Kingdom an opportunity to put forth once again the Arab nationalism and values that arose in the region during the First World War.

The influx of Palestinian refugees across Jordan after the Arab-Israeli war has overwhelmingly altered the demographic structure of the country and the Transjordanian has become numerically minority. Given the fact that, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan was the only country in the region granting citizenship to the Palestinian migrants in the aftermath of the war, this policy of the Kingdom would lead to the incumbents to reformulate their politics of identity. Within this context, the processes of nation building and identity formation in the case of Jordan have eventually brought a state of regular change. In order to analyze the change and the politics of identity in the country, it is imperative to understand the Palestinian dimension of Jordan.

Between Palestinianness and Jordanianness: A Hybrid 'Urdustini' Jordanian Identity?

The historical bounds that connect both Palestine and Jordan and the processes of nation-state building in the Kingdom have all interwoven with the unsettlement of Palestinian – Israeli dispute. For that reason, the question of identity has always been the most sensitive issues shaping Jordan's political landscape. The community living in the Eastern part of the River has been considered as Transjordanians. Due to the fact that Jordan was not the ancestral land of the first Emir (and later the King) Abdallah I, the native population of the Emirate and later the Kingdom has been considered as Eastern Jordanians (i.e. East Bankers).⁶ Nevertheless comprising 93% of Sunnis, the population of Jordan is the most homogeneous one as compared to the other Arab countries, the issue of Palestinian migrants in the aftermath of the 1948 – 49 War and precisely after the Six Days War in 1967 have all brought new dynamics such as redemarcation of frontiers and normalization of relations with Israel as well as shaping the politics of identity and democratization movements in the Kingdom.

The political legitimacy of the Kingdom has historically been acquired from the *Bedouins* (East Bank tribes). This socially constructed tribal affiliation, however, has begun to alter with the end of the civil war in 1971 and the emphasis made to the local and tribal attachments have been rapidly increased in order to contain and weaken the Pan-Arabist and Palestinian identities. Looked from this perspective, the 1970 – 1971 civil war that urged the Jordanian security forces to be up against the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) led to the reconstruction of both nation and identity building processes in the country.⁷ According to Iris Fruchter-Ronen, King Hussein's assetment immediately before the outbreak of the civil war clearly indicates the shift in Jordan's identity politics in the early 1970s.

King Hussein following the War at *Karameh* in 1968 said that;

“the struggle for liberating Palestine is not only that of the Palestinian community in the West Bank, but rather that of the whole of Jordan, headed by King Hussein. Moreover, Hussein asked also to insinuate that just as the Muslim nation could not revive itself without these two elements – the Muhajirun and the Ansar – so too would Jordan not be able to exist without these two ”⁸.

It's apparent that this statement of King Hussein symbolizes the main policies of nation and identity building of the Hashemite monarchy until the early 1970s. In other words, this above statement demonstrates that the Kingdom did not only perceive the Palestinian-Jordanians as an integral part of Jordan until the outbreak of the civil war, but also underlines the very fact that the quest for Palestinian liberation has been a common matter for the Hashemites as well as the Palestinian descents.

In this respect, the politics of identity pursued by the Kingdom until the onset of the civil war was rested on the notion of both West and the East Bank of the River constitute an indivisible unity. However with the end of the Black September Episode, the Transjordanian nationalists having close ties with the King were agreed upon both the reconsideration of the status of Palestinians residing in Jordan and the West Bank occupied by Israel during the 1967 War. In addition, rethinking on the politics of identity will occupy Kingdom's main agenda immediately after the recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of Palestinian community by League of Arab States at Rabat Summit.

Although it was intended to formulate a hybrid Jordanian identity through granting citizenship to Palestinian migrants, the Black September Episode led to the crystallization

of the division among the Palestinian-Jordanians and Jordanian-Jordanians. Since then PLO lost Jordan as a base for its struggle for national liberation. In this regard, the perception of 'other' was added to the process of nation-building in the country following the fragmentation of the two communities in the aftermath of the civil war which was initially missing in constructing a native Jordanian identity. Thus, the Hashemites' policy of *controlled* homogenization efforts will be replaced by policy of 'the East Bank First Trend'.⁹

Period after 1988 – 89: Policies of Democratization and *Jordanization*

The late 1980s have brought a watershed with respect to the politics of identity in Jordan. The motives behind this transformation were tied with the onset of Palestinian *intifada* in 1987 and King Hussein's decision to disengage from the West Bank territories in 1988.¹⁰ Kingdom's decision to sever its ties with the West Bank can be apparently perceived as a shift to redefine Jordanian identity and represents a move towards democratization. The Kingdom was historically caught between interplay of Palestinian national movement for independence and Arab nationalism during 1950s and 1960s.¹¹ For that reason, Kingdom's policy of severing ties with the West Bank did not only derive from the Palestinian threat with the onset of Palestinian (*intifada*) uprising, but also closely tied with the conceptualization of Jordanian priorities and preferences. Within this framework, the year 1988 manifests a milestone concerning internal and external policy making of the monarchy. The 'ethnic division' persisted, since the unification of the West Bank territories, among West Bankers and East Bankers put constraints on Kingdom's foreign policy objectives (specifically Kingdom's attempts to normalize its relations with Israel) which were caused by the demographic structure and the quest for Palestinian liberation. Thus, the Kingdom would then recognize that attaining a 'territorial' (*watani*) Jordanian identity will only be pos-

sible through disassociating its ties with the West Bank territories.

This new policy of the Hashemite monarchy has brought a Kingdom-led public debate on Jordanian identity that would justify the rhetoric of 'Jordan is Jordan'. In this respect, the very reconstruction of Jordanian identity was once more reinforced following the peace treaty with Israel in 1994. In fact, Jordan's attempt to normalize its relations with Israel was a critical step towards weakening the rhetoric of 'Jordan is Palestine'. Given that the majority of the Kingdom's population is of Palestinian origin, this led Jordan to be perceived as an alternative homeland (*al-watan al-badil*) for the Palestinians.

In brief, King Hussein's decision to disengage from the West Bank territories in 1988 manifests a stepping stone in the reformulation of Jordanian identity. Within this context, the Kingdom has urged the necessity to mobilize the transnational identities (such as Arabism) to act in line with loyalty to the throne. The change in politics of identity would, then, move together with the economic crisis in bringing a trend towards democratization in the country.

Jordan's Democracy Test

One of the main motives behind the trend towards democratization in Jordan has been the unrest in city of Maan located in the southern part of the country where the Kingdom has largely acquired its popular support and legitimacy. The economic recession and the decrease in oil prices led the Maanis (which is a non-Palestinian city) for the first time in Jordan's history to oppose to Kingdom's policies.

The Hashemite Kingdom has historically opted to gain its popular support through the system of patronage. Particularly with the 45% devaluation in Jordanian Dinar and rapid increase in basic food prices urged the regime

to take some measures, i.e. to move towards democratization. One of the main outcomes of this decision to liberalize was to hold elections in 1989 after 22 years. With the National Charter of 1992 that permitted a pluralist political space with legalized political parties, Jordanian political groups have been granted the opportunity of public contestation and the ability to run in subsequent 1993 elections.¹²

With the 1989 elections the Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan*) captured 21 seats out of 80 seats in the Jordanian Parliament and the total number of the Islamists in the new *Majlis* was 34. In this regard, the *Ikhwan* has begun to obtain a new political role in Jordanian internal landscape. The prime-minister Mudar Badran – who had close ties with the Islamists – took five members of the Muslim Brotherhood to his cabinet. Given that the IAF has been legalized with the inauguration of the new Political Parties Law in 1992, since then the Front represents inarguably not only the symbol of opposition, but also the *moderate* Islamist party of Jordan having the largest organizational and ideological base.

Following the decision of the Kingdom to sever its ties with the West Bank, the electoral law was then rapidly revised to replace multiple-votes formula with the formula of 'one-person one-vote' which was a regime survival policy as a response to the victory of the Islamists in the previous elections.¹³ For instance, the allocation of the seats in the Lower Chamber pertaining the cities of Karak, Tafila and Maan has been increased not only due to their demographic structure, comprising Jordanian-Jordanians; but also their loyalty to the throne was instrumental in reformulating the said law.¹⁴

Revising the Electoral Law was closely associated with upcoming peace making with Israel consequent to the Oslo Accords. With the aim restricting public discontent and any potential resistance in the parliament in front of normalizing ties with the Israel, regime urged

the necessity to amend the electoral law in 1993. The new electoral law which was aimed to weaken the role of Palestinians then led to the Islamization of Palestinian identity in the country. Given the fact that, forming political parties with Palestinian identity has been outlawed immediately after the unification of the two Banks, the Palestinian descents moved towards to adhere to Islamist groups with the aim of increasing their representation in Jordanian internal politics. In this regard, it is also imperative to observe the Islamization of Palestinian national struggle with the onset of a new regional dynamic; i.e. the second *intifada* – *Al Aqsa Intifada*.¹⁵

Among all Islamist organizations, the IAF occupies a central place in Jordan.¹⁶ With the legalization of the political parties in 1992, the IAF has become the sole political group where Palestinians adhere regardless of their ethnic background. For instance Ishaq Farhan, a Jordanian of Palestinian origin (born in West Bank) and a senior member of the *Ikhwan*, who adhered to the Brotherhood in 1948, emphasizes the maintenance of the political stability of the country as well as their loyalty to the Hashemite monarchy. For that purpose the IAF – representing the bulk majority of Islamist movement in Jordan – can be considered as a moderate and non-violent Islamist political party as compared to others in the Arab Middle East.

The watershed in transforming *Ikhwan* into an opposition group was the years of climax of Arabism and Nasserism during 1950s and 1960s. The Islamist movement under *Ikhwan*'s control therefore represents a long-standing neutral ally of the monarchy. One of the main sources of this close relationship between the regime and the *Ikhwan* is closely linked to the Brotherhood's *tacit* support to the Hashemite Kingdom due to compelling forces posed by Arabist and leftists camps throughout 1950s and 1960s. However *Ikhwan*'s resistance to the Oslo Peace Accords brought a new era in shaping its very relation with the throne. The

growing influence of Hamas and its ties with Jordanian Brotherhood after the first Palestinian *intifada* brought a new dynamic weakening *Ikhwan*'s role in building a bridge in settling Arab-Israeli dispute from Kingdom's perspective.¹⁷

Besides these facts, Kingdom's policy of disassociating the two Banks in 1988 manifests another source of divergence and melting pot in rebuilding the non-confrontational relationship with the Islamists in the country, the *Ikhwan* in particular. The *Ikhwan* then joining with the other Islamist groups formed the *Committee for Resisting Submission and Normalization* (CRSN) with the aim of blocking normalization of ties with Israel. One key development during this period was the adherence of native Jordanians into the opposition bloc with the Palestinian descents for the first time in country's history. For instance one of the key figures participated in resisting normalization of relations with Israel was a Salt-born (East Banker) IAF member, Abdul Latif Arabiyyat. Another symbol of the opposition was a native Jordanian Ahmad Obeidat, a former prime minister.¹⁸

Despite the opposition in front of the normalization with Israel, the Parliament ratified the peace treaty and lifted the laws that put ban on building relations in trade and economics realms with Israel. However, Mossad's attempt to assassinate the leader of Hamas Halid Meshal on Jordanian territories and Israel's rejection to withdraw from the settlements in the West Bank subsequently increased the public discontent in Jordan.¹⁹

After the deportation of Hamas leaders including Halid Meshal from Jordan caused a tension between the *Ikhwan* and the regime. It has become apparent that the policy of disengagement from the West Bank in 1988 and subsequent closure of Hamas offices in the country in 1999 were tightly intertwined with Kingdom's endeavor to improve its relations with Israel. Regime's perception of Hamas as well as the Islamist groups as a threat can be

examined as a direct outcome of the lack of justifiability of normalizing ties with Arabist and Islamist identities socially embedded in Jordanian society.²⁰

In controlling the growing internal opposition, the Hashemites opted to restrain the popular discontent through undertaking several regime-survival strategies, such as revising the Press and Publication Law in 1998. The 1998 Law put explicit limitations on publications damaging national unity and also any publication or article that can strain the relationship between two communities is strongly outlawed.²¹ The 1998 Law authorizes the court to suspend or send for trial those publications damaging national unity and public order. In brief, the regime opted to take measures to control the political opening through reformulating Electoral and Press and Publications Law following the inauguration of the monarchical pluralism by 1992 onwards.²²

On the one hand, the Kingdom has left its policy of mobilizing Arabist identity particularly after the 1970 – 71 civil war, and consequently moved towards strengthening an East Bank loyalty after the severing ties with the Palestinian lands. With the onset of Palestinian *Al-Aqsa intifada*, Jordan's demand to protect its 'warm peace' with Israel was strictly undermined by the internal opposition. For that purpose, the King announced Jordan First Campaign (*al-Urdun Awalan*) as a mechanism to strengthen *watani* preferences and identity as well as its territorial foreign policy making. Within this framework, the outbreak of *al-Aqsa intifada* has eventually brought new local and regional dynamics that would transform the trend towards democratization in the country.

The Impact of Regional Developments on Trend Towards Democratization

Social and political challenges caused by the *al-Aqsa intifada* led King Abdallah II and his

men to rethink on diversifying Palestinian element from Jordanian 'newly formulated' interests. In line with this policy, the Kingdom moved towards to redefine the meaning and the scope of how to be a Jordanian (East Banker) *loyal* national through the inauguration of 'Jordan First, Arab Second Campaign'. The Jordan First is an identity-rebuilding motto that can be instrumental in depicting Kingdom's politics of identity in the post-*intifada* period regardless of Jordanian citizens' ethnic origin. Although the Campaign offers a nationalist discourse, it has, nevertheless, become the main strategy of the Kingdom to cope with the resurgence of Palestinian uprising. The Jordan First is, thus, aimed to make Jordanian identity more *Jordanized*, un-*Palestinized* as well as less *Arabized*.

After the onset of Palestinian *intifada*, demonstrations in the form of anti-Israeli and pro-Palestinian sentiments erupted in the streets of Amman and Maan. The Ministry of Interior immediately sought to contain the growing opposition through banning public rallies. The government then passed the temporary law of Assembly and Public Demonstrations to maintain the national unity.²³ Simultaneously the King Abdallah II appointed Ali Abu Rageb as the prime-minister allowed the Palestinians to enter into the cabinet with the aim of integrating Palestinian descents. The King then asked the Rageb government to revise the legal system. The King's Report included reformation in three main realms; administrative, socio-economic and political. Thus, the outbreak of Palestinian *Al-Aqsa intifada* in 2000 instead precipitated the de-liberalization measures of the monarchy that were already in force. The pre-emptive measures of the Kingdom in containing the growing opposition in the form of anti-Israeli and pro-Palestinian discourses revealed the necessity to retreat from ongoing process of political liberalization. Given that the *Ikhwan* as well as the Front has been the main catalyst in energizing the internal opposition, the Hashemite Kingdom's response was to

re-consider its exceptional relations with the *Ikhwan*. Under these circumstances, Jordanian government diverted its position away from Palestinian cause toward preserving domestic unity and on 17 June 2001 King Abdallah announced to postpone the elections to an unspecified date and to dissolve the Parliament as a critical response to internal unrest persisted in the country. When the upcoming US strike against Iraq and the growing anti-American sentiment are taken into account; it was a delicate moment of the King to postpone the elections in order not to endanger its close ties with the US as well as Israel.²⁴

Simultaneously, the new Electoral Law passed in 2001 increased the number of seats in the Lower Chamber from 80 to 104 and also reserved six seats for women candidates. Nevertheless efforts have been made to improve the electoral law, the priorities and preferences of the opposition including the IAF, Palestinian-Jordanians and leftist groups were not taken into the agenda. The fundamental opposition of the IAF in criticizing the law was rooted in the uneven representation of Palestinians in the Parliament (residing in the northern cities) in favor of the southern parts where native Jordanians live.²⁵ The IAF and Palestinians rather support the allocation of the districts and seats in the Lower Chamber in accordance with the criterion of population size. According to IAF, if the electoral law is devised with an egalitarian approach on the basis of population size, they would have the ability to get the 40 – 50% of the total seats in the Chamber. The allocation of the seats in the Parliament favoring the southern cities resulted in forming a legislative organ comprising both pro-regime loyalists and independent candidates since 1993 onwards. An outcome as such then clearly manifests the success of Kingdom's policies.

In this regard, Kingdom's initiative of Jordan First can be regarded as 'Security First' approach to monitor the public unrest, instead of a policy of nation building.²⁶ Thus the re-

gime re-assured the necessity to bring politics of identity back to the agenda due to the empowerment of the internal opposition. Although the IAF and the *Ikhwan* sustain their role of loyal opposition, caught between the regional predicaments mobilized the regime to take several internal measures. Jordan is affected by the developments on Occupied Palestinian Territories more than any other country in the region. For instance, an influx of Palestinian migration across Jordan might change the demographic structure in the country and may revitalize Likud Party's rhetoric of 'Jordan is Palestine'. King Abdallah II for that purpose attempted to maintain the national unity via initiating Jordan First Campaign and taking steps towards reformation to cope with the regional challenges.²⁷

The initiative of Jordan First, since its inauguration, aims to strengthen the political parties, establish a Constitutional Court to facilitate juridical system and reconstruct civil society organizations.²⁸ In line with these goals, the Campaign addressed the classification of 31 registered political parties into three main categories as left, right and center. The emphasis and the financial support made to the political parties under Jordan First tacitly rooted in the weakening the role and functioning of civil society organizations. In attaining the fundamental objectives of curbing unemployment and coping with the regional predicaments, the King aimed to establish a regime-led opposition to replace partially the patronage system which was weakened due to economic problems. To put this new policy into practice, the King set up the Committee of National Agenda.²⁹

The regime was then forced to launch the Committee of National Agenda and inaugurate the 'Jordan First' Campaign in the aftermath of the social unrest erupted in November in the city of Maan. Under the effects of unsettlement of the Palestinian problem and the possibility of the US strike against Iraq the public discontent grew in the country. It was

the economic grievances that profoundly induced residents of Maan in previous demonstrations of 1989 and 1998. However riots in the post-2000 period were neither linked to ill-treatment of Maani economy nor regime's biased policies. The US diplomat working for International Development Agency (USAID), Laurence Foley was gunned down in Amman on 28 October who was the first Western diplomat assassinated in Jordan. After the assassination of Foley, Jordanian authorities required to have large scale apprehension and questioning in the country. A local *Jihadi* militant Islamist, Muhammad Shalabi better known as *Abu Sayyaf*, was the most wanted name since he organized a demonstration near Maan backing the policies of Osama Bin Laden on the day after Foley's assassination. Abu Sayyaf harshly disapproves the policies of Jordanian state and he advocates an Islamic state to replace the Hashemite monarchy. On 29 October 2002 when Shalabi was traveling from Amman to Maan he was detected by the police and was shot on his shoulder. This was followed by the entrance of security forces in the governorate on 9 November to seize Abu Sayyaf and was ended up by taking many people into custody.³⁰ This Maani episode bitterly harmed state-society relations bringing untrustworthy and indifferent Jordanians, primarily Maanis, to oppose to the governmental policies for the first time.

The Maani episode forced the Kingdom to deepen the Jordan First Campaign and retreat from the trend towards democratization with the aim of justifying her foreign policy objectives. The pre-emptive measures of the Kingdom will also work in parallel with the US intervention in Iraq by 2003 onwards. The Maani incident is instrumental in exposing two main issues shaping Jordanian politics: First of all, the regime historically perceived the Palestinian descents in the country as the main source of internal instability with the unification of the two Banks in 1950. However, the social unrest erupted in Maan has clearly demonstrated a new dynamic in Jorda-

nian politics in that East Banker – Bedouins have also taken an important role in growing internal opposition as well as the Palestinian descents. In addition, the native Jordanians similar to Palestinian-Jordanians have concerns regarding the developments on Palestinian lands. In this regard, regime's close ties with Israel and the US brought a public outcry in the country, Maan in particular. Key figures in Jordanian politics Adnan Abu Odeh and Toujan Faisal as such argue that if there is a need to construct a territorial identity in Jordan this could only be formed through an inclusionary approach that would embrace the whole population. For instance, Toujan Faisal, a territorial Jordanian identity can be built on the idea of '*Urdustini*' which incorporates a hybrid allegiance of both Jordanians and Palestinians.³¹ Likewise, Adnan Abu Odeh asserts that if the aim is to establish a common Jordanian consciousness this should be in parallel with revising the Political Parties Law and Electoral Law as well.³²

Under the effects of regional challenges, dissociating Arabist, Islamist and parochial loyalties from Jordanian identity formation would reinforce the Kingdom to make its external policy-making thinkable and justifiable. Looked from the perspective of the Hashemite Kingdom, the Jordan First initiative and the retreat from democratization were not adequate in bringing internal stability. This also depicts the fact that Jordan has been caught between the asymmetrical outcomes of its internal and external policy-making.

The New Dynamics of the Middle East and the Unchanging Politics of Jordan

Along with the persistence of identity-security matter rooted in Palestinian question, Jordan's internal and external policy making will then be reshaped by the intervention in Iraq – which was a part of US strategy of war on terror. The growing tension in the region in the aftermath of September 11 attacks that exclude different identities and ideologies

have revitalized and mobilized the Islamist, Arabist and Palestinian-oriented political parties and groups in Jordan. Thus the US intervention in Iraq revealed the debates on parochial, ethnic and transnational identities in the region.

With the onset of US war in Iraq, the power sharing system dominated by the Sunni community swiftly altered in favour of the Shiites in the country. The emergence of Sunni-Shiite cleavage in Iraq did not only transform Iraqi political system but also brought region wide implications. One of the key ramification of this sectarian cleavage was the growth of Sunni Islamist movement vis-a-vis the Shiites which manifested itself in the form of *Al-Qaeda*, *Wahhabism* and *Salafism*. The increased in the support for the Sunni identity brought by these groups radically alerted the Kingdom due to the existence of Sunni Islamist groups historically and socially embedded in Jordanian society.

In this context, it was central for the Kingdom of Jordan to support the maintenance of Iraqi territorial integrity as well as its national unity. The motive behind the policy of Jordan was rooted in two reasons; given the borders of the countries in the region have been delineated by the colonial powers, the re-demarcation of Iraqi frontiers would reveal the possibility of redefining Jordanian borders i.e. revitalization of the rhetoric of 'Jordan is Palestine'. In other words, the preservation of Iraqi territorial integrity was conceived as a guarantee for the Jordanians themselves. Secondly, supporting the rights of the Iraqis and their national unity can be used as a prop by the Kingdom in coping with the internal opposition. Nevertheless the Kingdom's policy of identity formation was rested on a pure Jordanian one, the regime aimed to weaken the impact of anti-American and Islamist forces through utilizing an Arab nationalist discourse. Thus strengthening Iraqi territorial integrity occupies a crucial place in consolidating Jordanian stability as well.

One of the main implications of the war in Iraq was the perception of a growing *Salafi* Islamist movement in the country. Particularly, the establishment of *Tandhim al-Qai'da fi Bilad al-Rafidayn* (al-Qaeda's Organization in Mesopotamia) in the Sunni areas of Iraq following the US invasion in 2003 by Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi (a Jordanian-Jordanian *Salafi Islamist*) alarmed the Kingdom radically. In addition, Zarqawi and his fellows belonging to *Salafi* and *Jihadi* groups were all come from the city of Zarqa located in the north of Amman depicted a critical moment for the Kingdom in that the nature and the structure of the Islamist groups in Jordan might change with the insurgence of *Salafi* movement. In addition, Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, a Palestinian-Jordanian, was another leading actor of *Jihadi Salafism* in Jordan who had previously served as a religious advisor to Zarqawi.

During 1960s and 1970s when Jordanian political parties were banned and there were no room for political and ideological affiliation, the *Ikhwan* established its charitable organizations all around the country and formulated its close ties with the Hashemite regime on a non-confrontational basis. In addition, Muslim Brotherhood was instrumental in co-opting Bathist, Nasserist, and Arabist forces. The shift in Islamist identity from a moderate to a more radical manner was directly related with the regime preferences to establish close ties with the US and Israel. Likewise, the decline in the economic and political powers of the main tribal groups in the country also led them – if not all – to attach to Islamist identity and *Salafism*.

In addition, the increased support of the Palestinian citizens for the Islamist movement was also rooted in the change in Kingdom's policy towards the Palestinian descents Jordanians in the aftermath of severing ties with the West Bank in 1988. Following the September 11 attacks and the US invasion in Iraq, 1,700 people were detained due to their religious beliefs in Jordan.³³

The one of the main outcomes of Jordan's regime survival strategy has shown itself in 2007 elections where the re-composition of the Lower Chamber of the Parliament was primarily dominated by independent and pro-regime loyalists allowing the IAF to gain only six out of 110 seats in the legislature.³⁴ It is critical to point out at this point that, 22 candidates of the IAF who run in 2007 elections were not affiliated to Hamas.³⁵

The triple suicide bombings in Amman on 9 November 2005 were central in understanding the fact that the main source of threat in Jordan is rooted in Kingdom's foreign policy making. One of the main reason behind Jordan's close ties with the US is primarily linked to Kingdom's dependency on external revenues. Looked from this perspective, it is still highly contentious to what extent regime's policy of Jordanization will work for diassociating Jordanians' agenda from the regional challenges and homogenizing the society. Specifically the pre-emptive legal measures imposed after 2005 bombings restricted the space of the Islamist opposition (the IAF in particular) for political contestation. For instance, engaging in political activities in mosques was banned and the first reaction to this policy have been brought by IAF's former leader, Abdul Latif Arabiyyat. Arabiyyat said that, the Front and the Ihkwan have always been open to work in line with the Hashemite monarchy and possesses the role of diminishing the insurgence of radical Islamist movement in the country. Given that IAF's non-confrontational linkage with the regime has always been a concern for other Islamists in the country and hence regime's policy of containing Islamist groups led some of the Islamists to adhere to militant groups explicitly in the aftermath of the US war in Iraq.

In this regard, the domestic threat perceived by Jordanian regime is profoundly related to the future dialogue with the Islamists in the country. The area of cooperation between the state and the IAF, the political arm of the

Muslim Brotherhood, has become doubtful when four IAF delegates visited Zarqawi's funeral house in Zarqa after his death for condolence. The Jordanian Senate President called on the Front to "question the deputies for their criminal act" in June 2006.

Political Reformation in Jordan: A Dilemma?

It has been widely supposed that the ascendancy of King Abdallah II to the throne would reinforce the political opening in Jordan, the preferences of the opposition was not brought to new King's agenda. Since the opening of the Parliament in 1989 the elections held in Jordan have for the most part resulted in the victory of pro-regime candidates.³⁶ According to the poll conducted by the Center for Strategic Studies located in the University of Jordan, Jordanians evaluated the level of democracy in their country as 5 out of 10. The poll also showed that 85% of Jordanians demand to be governed by democracy.³⁷

The dilemma that the Kingdom is confronted in the post-1989 era derives from the two main aspects; the incapability of the regime in coping with the economic recession and regional challenges through pursuing *patronage* system, which is old fashion; and moving towards deliberalization due to the growing internal opposition.

Nevertheless the opening of the Parliament in 1989 was a melting pot in Kingdom's history of democracy; political space for public contestation is confined to the legislature dominated pro-regime loyalists. For instance, since 1993 elections nearly half of the delegates elected to the Jordanian parliament were either Jordanian nationalists or belong to the National Movement bloc represented under the leadership of Abdul Hadi al-Majali who has close ties with the Kingdom.³⁸

King Abdallah's decision to suspend the parliament in November 2009 occupies another

milestone in reshaping the dynamics within the context of democratization.³⁹ According to the Constitution of Jordan, the elections should be conducted within four months after the suspension of the parliament. At the same time, the King holds the power to postpone the elections for two more years. In this respect, the reason behind the suspension of the parliament can also be considered as time-saving measure to pass either temporary or new laws.

The Kingdom subsequently announced that the upcoming elections will be held on 9 November 2010 – on the anniversary of Amman Bombings.⁴⁰ The Kingdom before holding the elections increased the number of seats in the Lower Chamber from 110 to 120. However revising the electoral law did not please the reformers, precisely the IAF.⁴¹ When the results of the elections results are taken into consideration, the turnout was counted as 53% in Jordan as whole; and only 39% in Amman.⁴² It is also very important to state that the majority of the delegates elected to the Chamber were independent candidates. During the election campaigns the major themes were centred on unemployment, reformation, the future relations with Israel and Palestinian Issue. Based upon the public debates after the elections, it has been apparent that elections of 2010 symbolizes a testimony in disclosing Kingdom's *strategy of survival* and did not fulfil the demands of reformists⁴³; and offers a case in depicting the changing nature of the non-confrontational relationship between the regime and the *Ikhwan*.⁴⁴

The election boycott of the Muslim Brotherhood and the IAF was central in shaping the public debates concerning 2010 elections in Jordan. In fact, it's not the first instance that the Brotherhood decides to withdraw from the electoral process. Previously the IAF under the leadership of Abdul Latif Arabiyyat boycotted 1997 national elections. The central theme in shaping Front's boycott both in 1997 and 2010 elections were based on their

concern over the controversial *electoral law* dating back to 1993. For them, the amended electoral law is unbalanced and favoring tribal allegiances rather than *political parties*. Another argument behind Front's boycott was related with the 'moderate – conservative' split within the Brotherhood and their divergent positions weather to enter the elections or not.⁴⁵ In this respect, Brotherhood's opt for boycotting can be perceived as more of a political pressure for public space, workable constitutional monarchy and their full-integration into the domestic affairs of Jordan instead of seeing their motive as a process of radicalization of the *Ikhwan*. Thus, it has become apparent for the Front leaders that withdrawing from the electoral campaigns and elections would be a strategy to put pressure on the government to accelerate the reformation process and thus revise the controversial electoral law.

Concluding Remarks: The Arab Spring and Its Impact on Jordan

The social movements first erupted in Tunisia and then spread out to Egypt, Yemen, Algeria, Bahrain and Syria in the Arab world have subsequently led the political reformists in Jordan to put their preferences on the agenda. Particularly the public rallies organized in the form of protesting the government and the increased prices immediately after the Friday prayers urged King Abdallah II to replace prime-minister Samir al-Rifai with Marouf al-Bakhit who served as the prime-minister in the aftermath of the Amman Bombings in 2005.⁴⁶ Marouf al-Bakhit previously served as the Chief of National Security and worked as the Ambassador of Jordan to both Israel and Turkey respectively. On the one hand, regime's choice of appointing Bakhit as the prime-minister reinvigorates Kingdom's demand to sustain national unity and security, the Jordanians were not fully pleased by his appointment on the other. Given that the national elections held in 2007 has been the most controversial elections in Jordan's his-

tory which was conducted during Bakhit's rule; the public debates were largely centered on the very fact that, the elections were not conducted freely and fairly and moreover were corrupted by the former government.⁴⁷ With the aim of holding the elections in 2010, King Abdallah II has urged the necessity to revise the existing electoral law. Besides the electoral law, the 2010 elections in Jordan revealed public debates on several critical issues, namely the boycott of the IAF (including the *Ikhwan*); and Kingdom's relative decline in support in providing public sphere for *Ikhwan's* activities.

Immediately after the spread of the public rallies in 2010, King Abdallah II called for; "supporting all forms of constructive dialogue and standing firm against non-democratic moves that threaten the country's national unity".⁴⁸ The King also said that the demonstrations do "not represent Jordanians' morals and manners" and called for "leaving the event behind and opening a new chapter".⁴⁹ Beside these developments, the Kingdom authorized the National Dialogue Committee (NDC) to revise the Constitution.⁵⁰ The head of the Committee and the former prime-minister Tahir al-Masri announced that the NDC aims to make "changes to the elections and the political parties laws, is to finalise its recommendations before the end of May".⁵¹ Viewing the public rallies from the regime's perspective was quite imperative in that; Bakhit claimed that Jordanian *Ikhwan* has received instructions from Islamist leaders in Syria and Egypt. In this regard, Kingdom's policy towards the Islamists – the *Ikhwan* in particular – manifests the very fact that the non-confrontational relationship between the regime and the Brotherhood has now begun to acquire a vulnerable character.

The Jordanian branch of *Ikhwan* has always been loyal to Hashemite monarchy that was manifested itself in accompanying Kingdom's policy of 'unification of the two Banks' traces back to 1950. Precisely *Ikhwan's* viable position to deter anti-regime forces during the

heydays of Pan-Arabism as well as the Black September Episode promptly urged the regime to be on *Ikhwan's* crutches. The *Ikhwan* buttressed the Kingdom's policies in struggling with radical Islamic groups like *Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami* – the Islamic Liberation Party as well.⁵² The Islamist movement under *Ikhwan's* control therefore represents a long-standing neutral ally of the monarchy. The change in the nature of Jordanian opposition (precisely the *Ikhwan* and IAF) is, for the most part, linked to the normalization process as well as the deterioration of Oslo Peace Accords by the late 1990s.

Kingdom's option to normalize its ties with Israel in 1994 resulted in country-wide unrest. With the aim of containing the growing opposition, the Kingdom moved towards both undertaking pre-emptive measures and retreating from ongoing process of political liberalization.⁵³ Given that the *Ikhwan* as well as the Front has been the main catalyst in energizing the internal opposition, the Hashemite Kingdom's response was to re-consider its exceptional relations with the *Ikhwan*. Exerting strict surveillance on the Islamists has weakened the public space of the IAF to attain viable political contestation. The Front, in the view of this, acquired only 6 seats in the Parliament in the 2007 elections. Nevertheless the Kingdom shifted to restrain the public space of Islamist movement, the ruling elite also bears in mind the power and capability of the Brotherhood in encompassing various Islamists – militants – in the country. On the one hand, *Ikhwan* and its political arm – the IAF – are the key Islamist groups that can work and benefit from Jordanian political landscape; so their radicalization would result in weakening the sole opposition in Jordanian democracy. On the other, when it is viewed from the IAF followers, moving out of Jordanian constitutional system could be their ultimate end.⁵⁴

Looked from the ramifications of the Arab Spring and the reflections of the recent social movements in the Arab world; Jordan

exemplifies an exceptional case with its local and regional dynamics.⁵⁵ Within this framework, the Hashemite Kingdom is a testimony in terms of representing the most stable monarchy in the entire Arab world. In addition the survival and the maintenance of the Kingdom of Jordan have always been considered as priority in the eyes of the Western world due to its critical role in the Middle East Peace Process as well as its policy of granting citizenship to Palestinians migrants. The key methods of the Hashemite monarchy in attaining its regime survival comprise the efforts of political liberalization – regime *controlled* democratization and integrating the *Ikhwan* as an actor in Jordanian political landscape. Secretary-General of the *Ikhwan* Hamza Mansour's assessment of the Arab Spring clearly demonstrates the critical role of *Ikhwan*. Mansour said that; "There is no comparison between Egypt and Jordan. The people there demand a regime change, but here we ask for political reforms and an elected government".⁵⁶ In fact this statement of Mansour occupies a central place when the priorities of the Hashemite monarchy are taken into consideration. From the view of the regime, the only red line that the Kingdom will not negotiate is the survival and the maintenance of the monarchy.

On October 17, King Abdallah removed al-Bakhit from the office. King Abdallah evaluated Bakhit's dismissal as; "We have accepted

the resignation of Prime Minister Marouf al-Bakhit, taking into consideration the views of the various sectors of society as well as a letter we have received from the parliamentary majority".⁵⁷ Besides the rapid reshuffle in the cabinet, King Abdallah addressed the urgent implementation of Jordan's political reformation process – as he calls 'Comprehensive, Democratic Change and Political Reform'. In line with this strategy, the parliament will be authorized to appoint the prime-minister starting from January 1, 2012 for the first time in country's history.⁵⁸ In addition, the Parliament will have the floor in nominating the cabinet members. It is also expected that the Kingdom will hold the national elections next year in 2012, at earliest in June.

Although the Jordanian parliament today is missing a voice of opposition after the 2010 elections; the Front still represents the only organized opposition in the country that needs to be critically taken into consideration by the Hashemite throne. Ironically, the alienation of the Brotherhood as well as the Front from Jordanian internal politics would then restrict the Kingdom in attaining its longstanding regime-survival strategy. Therefore, Kingdom's policies regarding the future relations with Israel and trend towards democratization will have an impact on the emerging *complex* relationship between the *Ikhwan* and the throne.

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