

**TRAPPED BETWEEN DE-LIBERALIZATION, POLITICS OF
IDENTITY AND REGIONAL PREDICAMENTS:
“LESSONS FROM THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN”**

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Abstract

The formation of identity in the Kingdom of Jordan offers a case that can easily be found in most part of the Middle East where multiple sub-state and supra-state identities demarcate and shape the formulation of popular identities. In this regard, it is significant to examine the politics of identities in the Middle Eastern societies given the existence of permeable ideologies and supra-state identities. The fallacy of democratization in the region has been closely tied with the notions of inclusiveness and exclusiveness, particularly when the ‘incomplete’ national identity-building projects in most parts of the Middle East are considered. For that purpose, the main objective of this article is not to re-assert the uniqueness of the politics in the Middle East, but rather to add to the growing literature on ‘how politics of identities shape the process of democratization’ in the Jordanian case under specific circumstances, particularly regarding normalizing ties with Israel since the 1994 peace and the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada in 2000. One of the most detrimental effects of the regional challenges on Jordan has been the retreat from political liberalization. Although the Kingdom initiated political opening in 1989 that has continued until now, the existence of a Palestinian majority in the Kingdom and the resurgence of Islamist movements in the region forced the Jordanian regime to take some pre-emptive measures to contain the newly-emerging opposition groups. Actually it was the finalization of the peace treaty with Israel in 1994 that primarily led the Kingdom to slow down its democratization efforts. Moreover, the 9/11 attacks and US-led ‘war on terror campaign’ recently persuaded the Hashemite regime to strictly monitor the activities of the Islamist groups in the country, including the Muslim Brotherhood Society (al-Ikhwan). The retreat from political liberalization due to the regional instabilities has brought an outcry from the Islamic Action Front (IAF) members, the

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political wing of the Ikhwan. In this respect, the main objective of this article is to illustrate the overriding effects of the two main regional challenges on the Jordanian political landscape: the unsettlement of the Palestinian problem and the instabilities in Iraqi territories. Jordan responded to these external effects with two strategies: re-building the Kingdom's politics of identity through its "Jordan First, Arab Second" campaign and de-liberalizing the political arena by undertaking some legal measures.

Key Words

Jordan, Palestinian-Jordanians, politics of identity, regime survival, de-liberalization, al-Aqsa Intifada and Jordan First Campaign.

Introduction

Given the historical and political linkage that has closely bound the Jordanian and Palestinian entities, the Palestinian dimension and the continuous demographic imbalance in Jordanian society have become central in shaping the politics of identity in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Jordanian political history as a separate entity has, for the most part, coincided with that of the Palestinian national movement for many decades. Within the context of nation-building processes in the region, one of the fundamental problems in delineating Jordanian national identity is closely associating the territorial integrity of Transjordan with the Palestinian territories under Ottoman administration, and later influenced by the overlapping policies under the British rule.

Since it was created as a British mandate in 1921, Jordan has been considered as the most artificial of all the states in the region. For instance, Gudrun Kramer argues that the creation of Jordanian entity is "the very epitome of the *artificiality* in the region that has been successfully consolidated" as compared to other societies in the Arab world.¹ Even Ilya Harik, who considers Arab countries not only as old societies but also as old states, argues that Iraq, Syria, and Jordan are the only exceptions.² In this

¹ Ilya Harik, "The Origins of the Arab State System", in Ghassan Salamé, *The Foundations of the Arab State*, Croom Helm, 1987, p. 35.

² Laurie Brand, "Palestinians and Jordanians: A Crisis of Identity", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Summer 1995).

respect, this article tries to examine the *consolidation* of Jordanian national identity with its internal dynamics including *demographic imbalance*, *ethnic division* and *identity conflict* that circumscribe and mostly restrict the democratization efforts of the Hashemite regime in the aftermath of the al-Aqsa *intifada* in 2000. Since a common sense of Jordanian national identity has *not fully* developed yet, the focal point will be to explore the ongoing re-consolidation of Jordanian identity in the light of Palestinian dimension, which is a *constant* re-building process dating back to its independence.

The Palestinian Dimension in the *un/making* Politics of Identity in Jordan

Since the majority of the Jordanian population is of Palestinian origin, the internal and foreign policy of the Kingdom has been predominantly conditioned by the Palestine-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian movement for national liberation. Given the influx of some 700,000 Palestinians into Jordan, the politics of identity have been drastically re-formed by the overwhelming majority of the Palestinians. The unification of the East Bank and the West Bank has led the Hashemite regime to cultivate the roots of Emir Hussein's Arab nationalist goals of the early 20th century. Since then, Jordan's identity policies have been intermittently transformed and re-built due to the unsettlement of the Palestine problem.

The Palestinian issue has become central to Jordan's politics of identity, particularly with the Kingdom's policy of incorporation of the West Bank Palestinians (Palestinian-Jordanians) into Jordanian society in the aftermath of the first Arab-Israeli War of 1948–49. Given the reality that Jordan is not the ancestral land of the Hashemite family – who settled on the eastern part of the River Jordan before independence – *the East Bankers* have been considered to be the native population of the country. One of the main repercussions of the annexation of the Palestinian lands was therefore King Hussein's reverberated political discourse based on the theme of “Jordan is Palestine” and “Palestine is Jordan” during the 1950s and 1960s.³

³ Dan Diker and Pinchas Inbari, “Are There Signs of a Jordanian-Palestinian Reengagement?”, *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (19 July 2005), p. 1.

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The fundamental concern in the Jordanian politics of identity is rooted in the ethnic division among the native Jordanians (Transjordanians) and the Palestinian-Jordanians. Given that the politics of identity are constructed by multiple loyalties in the Arab world, the Hashemite Kingdom represents the very epitome of the overlapping transnational and local identities.⁴ While Jordan can be considered to be the most homogenous nation in the region with its 93% Arab population, territorial re-demarcations and the large influx of Palestinian refugees into Jordanian society have entirely changed this unique characteristic of Jordan in the Arab world. Jordan has been the only Arab country to grant citizenship to the Palestinians. Although only 5% of the population in Jordan is of Bedouin origin,⁵ the Jordanian identity for the most part has been built on the *Bedouins* since the establishment of the Emirate by British rule in 1923. Since then, the main source of political legitimacy and loyalty to the throne have stemmed from tribal affiliations and communal bonds.

The annexation of the West Bank territories with the Unity Act of 1950 has drastically transformed this figure when Palestinian migrants outnumbered the Jordanians in the country. The Palestinian-Jordanian ethnic division and clash of interests has depicted itself in the urban-rural cleavage as well. With the majority of Palestinians settled in urban areas, the demographic structure of the city-centers has quickly changed and the Palestinian people have gradually become the controllers of the economic sector in Amman, Zarqa and Irbid. The East Bank-origin Jordanians mostly live in the rural areas, primarily in Maan, Karak and Tafila in the south. The turning point in the regime differentiating Palestinians from the Jordanians was the amendment of the electoral law immediately after the severing of ties with the West Bank in 1989.⁶

The issue of citizenship clearly illustrates how Jordanian politics of identity are conditioned and shaped by the developments regarding the

⁴ Joseph Névo, "The Jordanian, Palestinian and the Jordanian-Palestinian Identities", *The Fourth Conference on Middle Eastern Studies: The Middle East in Globalizing World*, Oslo, 13-16 August 1998, p. 2.

⁵ "Bedouinization of Jordanian Identity", in Joseph A. Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of Jordanian Identity in Jordan*, Columbia University Press, 2001, pp. 72 – 73 and pp. 148 – 149.

⁶ Russell E. Lucas, *Institutions and Political Survival in Jordan: Domestic Responses to External Challenges, 1988 – 2001*, State University of New York Press, 2005, p. 77.

Palestinian-Israeli dispute. Similarly, Asher Susser has postulated that the reconstruction of Jordanian identity is rooted in the loss of the West Bank in 1967 and the Black September episode.⁷ Among others, the Palestinian problem constitutes a major source of ethnic division and identity conflict in the country. Accordingly, the *Jordanization* policy of the Kingdom following the *Fedayeen* Episode – the civil war of 1970-71 – stimulated a considerable number of Palestinian-Jordanians to take part, to vote in favor of Islamic society organizations, if not the IAF in particular.⁸

Islam has constituted the main communal tie between the Jordanian state and society. As Adeed Dawisha has brought to mind, Islam plays a part as “a motivator, legitimizer or simply as justifier” in formulating Jordan’s identity.⁹ Likewise, the Kingdom’s policy in the aftermath of the annexation of the West Bank was to use Islam and Arabism as the fundamental props to appeal to the whole population.¹⁰ It was the Black September episode in which the *Ikhwan* demonstrated its *neutral* loyalty to the regime policies. The *Ikhwan* steadily backed the Kingdom in struggling with radical Islamic groups like *Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami* (The Islamic Liberation Party).¹¹ One example to demonstrate the non-confrontational relationship between the state and the Brotherhood was Ishaq Farhan, a Jordanian of Palestinian descent who was the former head of the IAF and a senior member of the *Ikhwan*, served as the Minister of Education in 1970 and Minister of Awqaf between the years 1983 and 1985. Moreover Farhan was one of the members of the Upper House (the Senate) of the Parliament in 1989-1993.¹²

⁷ Asher Susser (et al), *The Hashemites in the Modern Arab World*, London, Frank Cass Publications, 1995, pp. 223 – 225.

⁸ Toujan Faisal, *Telephone Interview*, 22 September 2006.

⁹ Adeed Dawisha (ed), *Islam in Foreign Policy*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1986, p. 5, *Jordan and the Palestine Question: The role of Islamic and Leftist forces in foreign policy making*, ed. Sami al-Khazendar, International Politics of the Middle East Series, Reading, Ithaca Press, 1997, p.137.

¹⁰ Emile Sahliyah, “The State and the Islamic Movement in Jordan”, *Journal of Church and State*, (Winter 2005), p. 113.

¹¹ *Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami* was founded by Taqi al-Din Ibrahim Yusuf al-Nabahani in 1952 who led the group until his death in 1977. Al-Nabahani rejected calls to unite with the Muslim Brotherhood and opted for creating an Islamic Caliphate. Shmuel Bar, “The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan”, The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University (June 1998), pp. 18-20.

¹² Glenn Robinson, “Can Islamists Be Democrats”, *Middle Eastern Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Summer 1997).

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In this context, the Jordanian branch of *Ikhwan* illustrates a case that can rarely be found in the Middle East where an Islamist organization has acted collectively with the monarchical regime and attempted to build national unity in a divided society.¹³ Therefore, as a 'supra-state identity,' Islam has played in the annexation of the West Bank territories and still plays a significant role concerning the Palestinian majority in the country in building a Jordanian identity.

Specifically, the democratic opening since 1989 has, increasingly, furnished the political power of the opposition forces in the country – mainly the Islamist groups – in resisting the normalization of relations with the Israeli state in the post-1994 era. Jordan's moves in 1989 towards liberalizing the repressive political rules were closely attributed to the exigencies of the deep economic crisis posed by its *rentier* economy in the late 1980s.¹⁴ The Jordanian democratization process has been associated with the necessity to maintain the relationship between the monarchy and the business elites, as well as contending Jordanian tribes. Since the Kingdom's policies could not solely compete within the economic requirements of the Jordanian tribes, particularly in the southern provinces of Maan and Tafila, the Hashemite rule shifted its policy of cooptation towards creating new sources of legitimacy. As Glenn Robinson argues, limited Jordanian liberalization during this period can be described as 'defensive democratization' which constituted a control mechanism of the regime with the aim of controlling the growing opposition through pre-emptive

¹³ Since the time when King Abdullah I legalized the Jordanian branch of *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin* (the Muslim Brotherhood) in 1945, the *Ikhwan* has always been a reform oriented organization pursuing the policy of using non-violent means. The *Ikhwan* therefore has become the key institution, which helped the Hashemite throne in building a new nation of Jordan. In addition, the *Ikhwan* gave a substantial support for the Kingdom in unifying the both Banks in 1950. The Islamic *hadith* (reported saying and practices of Prophet Muhammad) was central, in this sense, in defining *Ikhwan's* policy with respect to Kingdom's decision of annexation rather *Ikhwan's moderate* attitude and non-violent means used in building close affinity with the Hashemite regime. Another important position of the Brotherhood was its influence in combating against the leftist forces, Ba'athists, Socialists and Nasserists in particular, with the regime countrywide.

¹⁴ Scott Greenwood, "Jordan's New Bargain: The Political Economy of Regime Security", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (Spring 2003).

measures.¹⁵ In other words, the political reforms launched – such as opening of the Parliament in 1989 after 22 years and adopting the National Charter (*al-Mithaq al-Watani*) in 1992 that has legalized the political parties after 35 years – in the country were entirely tied to the continued survival of the regime.

Given that Palestinian-Jordanians have also benefited from the political liberalization efforts of the Kingdom, precisely the establishment of the IAF as the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood Society during this period enabled not only Jordanian-Jordanians themselves, but also Palestinian descendents, to articulate and aggregate their political demands to call for an even allocation of seats in the Parliament through the reformulation of the electoral law on the basis of accurate proportional representation and revising political parties & press and publication laws accordingly in the post – 1989 era. In this regard, Robinson also suggested that Jordan depicts a case that is not easy to find in the region where Islamists can work as an *impetus* for democratic expansion.¹⁶

The Peace Process: Debate on “Is Jordan Palestine” or “is Jordan Jordan”?

It is commonly argued that Jordan illustrates the *interplay* and *co-existence* of various identities of the region in which transnational (Arabism and Islamic identity), territorial (*watani*) and parochial (local and tribal) affiliations are transformed and shifted on the basis of changing internal and external dynamics occurring in the intra-regional Arab state-system. In this respect, it is central to Jordan’s politics of identity to examine the role of Jordan’s disengagement from the West Bank in 1988 and later the impact of the peacemaking with Israel in 1994. The Jordanian regime has responded to the threats directed against its existence by concluding a peace treaty with Israel in 1994 and launching a new policy of re-consolidating Jordanian national identity from 2002 onwards.

Jordan’s loss of the West Bank in 1967 cannot be considered as a failure of Jordan’s commitment to the Palestinian cause, but rather that the

¹⁵ Glenn Robinson, “Defensive Democratization in Jordan”, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 30 (1998).

¹⁶ Robinson (1997), op.cit, pp. 403 – 405.

detachment of Palestinian territories from Kingdom reinforced and supported the idea of an "East Bank/ Jordan First" campaign aimed at sustaining a communal Jordanian identity in the sense of *wataniyya*. For instance, Russell Lucas describes Jordan's attempt to conclude a peace agreement with Israel as "much for than recognizing the existence of the State of Israel ... [normalization] would mean a 'warm peace' with Israel – in contrast to Egypt's 'cold peace'... and it would be a stepping stone to regional order... [then] Jordan's borders would be secured, its economy enriched, and the monarchy's rule secured."¹⁷

Since the exodus of Palestinian refugees exacerbated the establishment of a Jordanian identity after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, the construction of a distinct Jordanian national identity has been a controversial and incompatible matter in the Kingdom's political history since its independence. According to Joseph Névo, if the Kingdom had allowed a policy of building a national identity encompassing both the East and the West Banks, the result would be a Palestinian identity instead of building a *pure* Jordanian one.¹⁸ Hence it was not the loss of the West Bank in 1967 but the increase in Palestinian population on the East Bank that has led to the *crystallization* of a Jordanian identity vis-à-vis a Palestinian identity.¹⁹ Throughout the years of 'controlled integration' of Palestinian identity – i.e. 1950s and 1960s – on the one hand, Palestinian-Jordanians have acquired Jordanian passports and citizenship; on the other hand, the Bedouin-origin East Bankers and the Palestinian-Jordanians have dominated the governance and political landscape by holding a disproportionately large number of significant political positions in the Kingdom.

With respect to the identity re-formation policy of the Kingdom, the most important development was the delineation of the concept of how to *be a pure Jordanian*. Given the presence of two conflicting ethnic groups and identities in the post-civil war era in Jordanian political history, the loyalty of Palestinian citizens has been a controversial issue. In the aftermath of the Black September, prime-minister Wasfī al-Tall inaugurated a new policy of

¹⁷ Russell Lucas, "Jordan: The Death of Normalization with Israel", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Winter 2004), p. 94.

¹⁸ Joseph Névo and Ilan Pappé (eds), *Jordan in the Middle, East Making a Pivotal State: 1948-1988*, Portland, Frank Cass Publishing, 1994.

¹⁹ Joseph Névo (1998), "Jordanian, Palestinian, ...", *op.cit.*, p. 4.

the West Bank being the homeland for Palestinians and the East Bank as the homeland for Jordanians. The tension in the post-1971 era between the two groups, the “political majority” of Transjordanians and “political minority” of Palestinian descents was exacerbated particularly after the severing of ties with the West Bank.²⁰

The period after King Hussein’s disengagement from the West Bank in 1988 marks the official strategy of shifting from *Arabism* to *wataniyya* in Jordan’s politics of identity. Then severing of ties with Palestine has not only transformed the meaning and the scope of Jordanian identity, but also the detachment of Palestine from Jordan has led the Kingdom to pursue the policy of Palestinian statehood as a source of political stability in the region. Israel occasionally pays attention to the concept of an alternative homeland and re-invokes the idea of ‘Jordan Option’ for the Palestinians living in the diaspora.

In the long-term, when the expectations and the preferences of the Jordanian regime and the society were subjected to change, the tension between the state and Jordanian nation grew because of two subsequent events: the anti-normalization campaign and the outbreak of the al-Aqsa *intifada* in September 2000. The democratization efforts of the monarchy had been instrumental in empowering different groups in the country to organize themselves in the national elections; one of the most significant groups that expanded during this period was the IAF, which has constituted the main political party since its establishment in 1992 and still does today. The Front’s political strength stems from two sources: it has an organic link with the *Ikhwan* and also the Front is the only political party that has a nation-wide organization and ideological base in Jordan.

Looked at from this viewpoint, the regime’s policy of liberalization in the post-1989 era represents not only a process of co-opting Palestinian-Jordanians, but also signifies a pre-emptive measure to contain the popular discontent among the Jordanian-Jordanians. Glenn Robinson argues that political reforms launched after 1989 were largely tied to the maintenance of internal stability and regime survival. Likewise, Laurie Brand posits a similar approach to the Jordanian democratic transition in which it can be

²⁰ Scott Greenwood, “Jordan’s New Bargain: The Political Economy of Regime Security”, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (Spring 2003).

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defined as a state-led process "aged from above, part of a strategy intended to ensure the continuation of the monarchy."²¹

Although King Hussein severed Jordan's ties with the Palestinian territories in 1988, the Kingdom continued to endorse the Palestinian position on the holy places – the Dome of the Rock in particular – in East Jerusalem. The Israeli recognition of the Hashemite Kingdom with the 1994 peace treaty endorsed, not only the existence of the Jordanian state in the region, but also the peace signifies the acknowledgement of a *de-facto* territorial arrangement concerning Jordan in the post-1988 era. With the impact of the liberalization of the political landscape, a national opposition front was set up to criticize the normalization of relations with Israel in May 1994.²² Eight Islamist and leftist political parties, including the Arab Ba'ath and Socialist Party, and primarily the IAF, under the label of the Popular Arab and Jordanian Committee for Resisting Submission and Normalization (CRSN), organized the opposition front.²³ It has become obvious that the CRSN will bring together, for the first time, Jordanian-Jordanians and Palestinian-Jordanians to unite together in resisting normalization.

The Israel Factor

The *de*-liberalization efforts in Jordan have been underway since the finalization of the peace treaty with Israel in 1994. Of the nations in the region, Jordan has the longest border with Israel. Jordan's choice to finalize a peace treaty with Israel in 1994 signified a defining moment for Middle East politics. The Jordan-Israeli peace symbolizes not only the recognition of Israel by an Arab state for the second time after Egypt, but also epitomizes the survival of the Kingdom of Jordan under Hashemite rule. As Curtis Ryan indicates, Jordan's peace-making with Israel can then be seen as King Hussein's "maneuver between political factions and coalitions on the domestic front, while attempting to balance domestic political and economic

²¹ Laurie Brand, "In the Beginning was the state... The Quest for Civil Society in the Middle East", *Civil Society in the Middle East*, ed. Augustus Richard Norton, Vol. I, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1995, p. 17. Please see also; Yitzhak Reiter, "The Palestinian-Transjordanian Rift: Economic Might and Political Power in Jordan", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Winter 2004), pp. 77-78.

²² Russell Lucas, "Jordan: The Death of Normalization with Israel", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Winter 2004).

²³ *Economist Intelligence Unit*, "Country Report: Jordan", (3rd Quarter 1994), p. 435.

concerns against regional and other external security factors.”²⁴ Jordan’s normalization of ties with Israel will ensure that the idea ‘Jordan is Jordan’ and ‘Palestine is Palestine’ prevails as opposed to Likud Party’s ‘Jordan is Palestine’ rhetoric that has been underway since 1977. In addition, normalizing ties with the Israeli state will enable Jordan to minimize its economic downturn by facilitating economic recovery with the help of setting up a qualified industrialized zone among two partners.²⁵ Looked at from Jordan’s regional security perception, sustainment of the peacemaking effort with Israel has been a critical concern for regime survival and, in line with this approach, any source of opposition towards normalization should be taken under control, including retreat from democratization, *if necessary*.

Although the Kingdom was ready and willing to normalize its ties with Israel as was clearly seen in Jordan’s daily newspaper *Jordan Times*, which described the Jordanian-Israeli peace as “historic achievement,” it was highly questionable to claim the same nuance for the entire population.²⁶ Meanwhile, the delegates in the Jordanian Lower Chamber – including Arabist, leftist and Islamist forces – all objected to the treaty. Meanwhile, the main opposition party in the Chamber, the IAF, announced that “the government is ready for a full peace treaty, but the public is not.”²⁷ Sixteen members of the Front declared their opposition to the peace treaty and boycotted US President Clinton’s speech in the Parliament. Given that the majority of the members of the Chamber were close to the regime policies, the peacemaking with Israel was subsequently approved.

The assassination of Ishak Rabin and the subsequent change brought Benjamin Netanyahu as the prime minister in Israel. Jordan’s normalization with Israel faced with a clear setback when the government in Israel decided to open a tunnel next to the Haram Al-Sharif in Jerusalem. During the protests against the Israeli government, more than 70 Palestinians lost their lives, which then led King Hussein to condemn Netanyahu’s “provocative

²⁴ Curtis R. Ryan, *Inter-Arab Alliances: Regime Survival and Jordanian Foreign Policy*, University of Florida Press, 2009, pp. 145 – 147.

²⁵ Laura Z. Eisenberg and Neil Caplan, “The Israel – Jordan Peace Treaty: Patterns of Negotiation, Problems of Implementation”, *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Spring 2003), p. 105 and pp. 389 – 390.

²⁶ Curtis Ryan (2009), op.cit, p. 155.

²⁷ Ibid.

act.”²⁸ Another setback following this event was the Israeli Ministerial Committee’s decision in 1997 to construct the Har Homa Housing Project in Jabal Abu Ghunaym in East Jerusalem. This action once again so alarmed the Kingdom that it declared its partner’s act as a “tragic action” detrimental to *their historic* normalization of relations.²⁹ The clashes between the Palestinians and Israelis afterward led the Palestinian authorities to outlaw selling land to Israelis under the penalty of death. The Daqamsa incident in early 1997 demonstrated the level of public anger in Jordan against Israel, which had become highly skeptical about peacemaking. Ahmad Daqamsa, a Jordanian soldier, gunned down Israeli schoolgirls taunting him while he was praying in Jordan Valley. Daqamsa was declared a hero in Jordan after this incident and King Hussein’s condolences to the girls’ families were interpreted as *unjustifiable* by conservative forces in Jordan. Moreover, Mossad’s attempt to kill Khalid Mashal – one of the founding members of Hamas – in Amman in September 1997 was proclaimed as a violation of Jordan’s security and peacemaking.³⁰

Nevertheless while the regime was caught up in internal unrest, the Kingdom’s perception was centered on the continuation of normalizing ties with Israel so that Jordan would recover from its economic downturn through the “encouragement of local and regional business.”³¹ The regime’s priority was to secure Jordan’s borders with Israel, which would then incontestably ensure Jordan’s unilateral demarcation of its western frontier in 1988 (disengagement from West Bank territories). On the one hand, the Kingdom urged the necessity to secure its survival in the region via the reassuring slogan ‘*Jordan is for Jordanians;*’ on the other hand, the public outcry during the peacemaking were focused on something else: “we are at an historic moment as an Islamic and Arab nation; we must unite as Muslims to preserve our interests and realize the full potential of the Islamic community by [precisely bringing a fair and durable settlement to Palestinian problem]”.³²

²⁸ Russell Lucas (2004), op.cit, p. 97.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 98.

³⁰ P. R. Kumaraswamy, “Israel, Jordan and the Mashal Affair”, *Israel Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Spring 2003), p. 120.

³¹ Jillian Schwedler, “Cop Rock: Protest, Identity, and Dancing Riot Police in Jordan”, *Social Movement Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (September 2005), p. 164.

³² Taken from the speech of Ishaq Farhan during anti-normalization campaigns organized after the peacemaking with Israel, former leader of IAF; Schwedler (2005), op.cit, p. 167.

Jordan's peacemaking efforts would be then put to a new test with the outbreak of the second Palestinian uprising in 2000. King Abdullah II was among the most significant leaders in the region supporting the implementation of the Saudi Peace Plan of 2002 and the Road Map brought by the Middle East Quartet in 2003. The Regime's zero-tolerance to public anger opposing normalization of relations would be apparent with the onset of the Al-Aqsa *intifada*. Although the Hashemite rule reversed the policy of democratization due to public rallies in the form of supporting the Palestinian uprising, the Jordanian – Israeli peace was unlikely to receive nationwide backing to set up a “warm peace” given the persistent loyalty to ‘Palestinianness’ and Arabist nationalist sentiments in the country.

Repercussions and Jordan's Responses after the Al-Aqsa Intifada: The Policy of “Two people on two lands”

The onset of the second Palestinian *intifada*, commonly known as the al-Aqsa *Intifada*, in 2000 helps illustrate how an external challenge combined with persistent internal public outcry invoke and transform multiple identities in the case of Jordan. In analyzing the repercussions of the al-Aqsa *intifada*, it's central to build a theoretical framework in order to discuss the impact of internal unrest and opposition that evolved around anti-normalization with the Israeli state in producing discursive contemplations on the very definition of Jordanian identity. The al-Aqsa *intifada* has generated a ‘clashing of expectations’ issue in Jordan between the regime and the Jordanian society, which has partially reformulated the antagonism between Jordanians and Palestinian descents.³³ In fact, the al-Aqsa *intifada* and, later on, the war in Iraq have precipitated the trend toward de-liberalization in the Kingdom.

In Jillian Schwedler's words, the “...events of September 11 did not so much change the course of domestic politics [political repression and policies of containment of the internal opposition] in Jordan.”³⁴ Jordan has previously felt the devastating effects of the Palestinian dimension even after

³³ Russell E. Lucas, “Press Laws as a Survival Strategy in Jordan, 1989-99”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (October 2003), pp. 81-98.

³⁴ Curtis Ryan, “Jordan First: Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations and Foreign Policy Under King Abdullah II”, *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Summer 2004).

the *fedayeen* episode and urged the politics of *re-Jordanizing the Jordanian identity*, dating back to the 1970s. In addition, it was the Jordanian *watani* identity that made the peace treaty with Israel – *if not* the normalization of relations – *imaginable* and *thinkable* via disassociating itself from that of Palestinian affiliation. Particularly after the Madrid Peace Talks and the signing of the Declaration of Principles (DoP) between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 1993, the Kingdom has put the emphasis on *detachment* from the West Bank territories and the Palestinian national movement for liberation with the aim of re-constructing her politics of identity. Given that concluding a peace treaty has posited Jordan at the core of identity politics in the region as a whole, King Hussein urged the following of his strategy to disengage Jordan from the debates on the Palestinian struggle for statehood. Since then it has been, officially, Jordanian *watani* sentiments and preferences instead of *Arabist* or *Islamist* supra-state identity that circumscribes and shapes Kingdom's politics of identity.

One of the most important dynamic shaping internal opposition was intertwined with the anti-normalization forces, which evidently included the East Bank Jordanians for the very first time in Jordan's history. The newly-empowered group composed of the Transjordanian people living in the southern governorates has now actively taken part in reproducing and precipitating anti-regime discourses with the persisting Palestinian factor. The intervening of East Bank Jordanians into the internal unrest has urgently incited the Jordanian regime to take the newly-growing East Bank phenomenon under strict control through pre-emptive measures. In this regard, the amendment of the Press and Publications Law in 1998 aimed to reduce the public debates, gatherings and demonstrations in support of Palestinian liberation movement.

The change in regime's policies towards *de-liberalization* was highly instrumental in transforming the position of the *Ikhwan* and its political wing, the IAF, vis-à-vis the Jordanian regime. Although the *Ikhwan* has been the long-standing *neutral* ally of the monarchy particularly after the *fedayeen* episode, the Brotherhood diverted their policies, mostly in Palestinian-Israeli dispute, away from that of the regime in the post-1994 era.

Onset of Al-Aqsa *Intifada*: First Phase: *Retreat* from political liberalization

The overriding effects of the Al-Aqsa *intifada* can be grouped in two categories in general: the process of the *re*-formation of the Kingdom's politics of identity and the setback in democratization efforts. The peacemaking with Israel and the outbreak of the al-Aqsa *intifada*, which exemplify two external challenges to the Kingdom of Jordan at the same time, represent the sources of reconstruction of Jordanian identity in view of the Palestinian fact. Immediately after the second Palestinian uprising on 2 October, a huge group of demonstrators condemned Israeli policies and called for the closure of the Israeli embassy in Amman. During this period, Prime Minister Ali Abu Ragheb included the Palestinian-origin Jordanians in the cabinet to take any nationalist and Arabist opposition under strict supervision. In particular, a former member of the *Ikhwan* became the minister of municipal, rural and environmental affairs. In the early days of the uprising, the Jordanian regime permitted public demonstrations in support of the *intifada*. When a huge protest was organized in the Baqaa refugee camp near Amman and Israeli diplomats were injured after an attack on the Israeli Embassy, the Kingdom however renounced the public rallies in support of Palestinian movement.³⁵ In addition, the anti-normalization campaign publicized a blacklist of individuals condemning those normalizing ties with Israel. Anti-normalization efforts of the opposition also took part in the Lower Chamber on December 13, 2001 when some members demanded to open a debate on the peacemaking with Israel.³⁶

Having felt the overriding effects of the al-Aqsa uprising, the Jordanian regime has been caught between the preferences and interests of the state on the one hand and the divergent expectations of its nation on the other. In the aftermath of the al-Aqsa *intifada*, the Kingdom has been urged to make any source of public discontent weaker, particularly those in the form of anti-Israeli and anti-US rallies. In this regard, the regime responded to the repercussions of the *intifada* in two ways: through banning public rallies backing the Palestinian uprising and *de*-liberalizing the political landscape, including the amendment of the electoral law in 2001.

³⁵ *Economist Intelligence Unit*, "Country Report: Jordan", (November 2000), pp. 14-15.

³⁶ *Economist Intelligence Unit*, "Country Reports", (June 2002).

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King Abdullah declared the dissolution of the Lower Chamber on 17 June 2001 as the Kingdom's first *de*-liberalizing measure to curb the anti-Israeli opposition in the legislature. Given that the Constitution of the Kingdom has been in force since the abolition of martial law and the adoption of National Charter (*al-Mithaq al-Watani*) in 1992, the Kingdom is required to hold parliamentary elections every four years.³⁷ The onset of the Palestinian *intifada* led the regime to postpone the 2001 national elections to an unspecified date. In the meantime, some 22 activists have been accused of having ties with illegal groups, and also of publicizing writings and carrying out acts harmful to the Jordanian people.³⁸ One critical response was renouncing the activities that can be considered to be a threat to Jordanian security and domestic stability by the Ministry of Interior.³⁹

Jordan passed temporary laws under Abu Ragheb's administration, including a ban on public rallies, and issued a new assembly law to cope with the growing opposition. The new assembly law adopted in August 2001 stipulated that "any meeting debating public issues required official approval from the local governor at least 48 hours prior to its scheduled start."⁴⁰ In addition, the electoral law amended in July 2001 has highly reflected the uneven representation of urban areas in favor of rural governorates in the south. Although the new law preserved the one-person, one-vote formula, it did not re-consider the allocation of the seats in the legislature. The 2001 electoral law expanded the number of seats in the Lower Chamber from 80 to 104. Six additional quotas will also be granted to women candidates. Given that the new law did not address the equitable re-distribution of electoral districts in accordance with the population size, the IAF members announced their decision not to participate in coming national elections. In order to cope with this situation, Ali Abu Ragheb brought a new formula of 'one-person, two-votes' in which voters will cast their first vote for the candidate in their districts and the other in favor of representing their governorates. This kind of a voting system will clearly provide tribal leaders

³⁷ Jordanian Constitution stipulates that the King is granted the right to postpone parliamentary elections for a period not exceeding two years time when the constitution is in force.

³⁸ *Economist Intelligence Unit*, "Country Reports", (June 2001), p. 15.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 16.

⁴⁰ Scott Greenwood, "Jordan, al-Aqsa Intifada and America's War on Terror", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. X, No. 3, (Fall 2003), pp. 91-92.

and East Bank elites the opening to dominate the Lower Chamber in the post-second *intifada* period.⁴¹

Onset of Al-Aqsa *Intifada*: Second Phase: *Re*-thinking Jordanian and Palestinian-Jordanians ideals and preferences

Besides the legal impediments adopted to contain opposition forces rooted in internal unrest, the Jordanian regime has sought to *re*-construct Jordan's identity and preferences in the post-2000 era. After his ascendancy to the throne, King Abdullah II has attempted to detach Jordanian politics from Palestinian politics. Unlike his father, King Abdullah has searched for a means to re-acquire the support of Palestinian-Jordanians by emphasizing a two-state solution for the settlement of the Palestinian problem. The main divergence of King Hussein's policies regarding Palestine was King Abdullah's objective to diminish any kind of internal unrest with the new policies of identities. Therefore, King Abdullah's policy of re-forming Jordanian identity is two-fold: shifting Jordanian politics away from Palestine and the corollary of this, re-constructing a *watani* identity to surpass supra-national identities like Arabism and Islam. Since Jordanian identity has previously incorporated *Arabist* and *Islamist* preferences to integrate West Bankers into the East Bank, diversifying the Palestinian element from Jordanian interests would allow the regime to re-identify the meaning and the scope of how to be a pure Jordanian national. King Abdullah's assessment with respect to the post-*intifada* period has been summarized as follows:

...The Jordanian position has been made very, very clear that we do not accept an exodus of Palestinians out of the West Bank into Jordan. Firstly, it is detrimental to the Palestinian cause. If there are no Palestinians in the West Bank, how can they secure a future homeland for themselves? And again the limitations of Jordan – it is not just the economy – it comes simply down the amount water that Jordan can provide its citizens and so any increase of numbers or exodus from the West Bank into Jordan is a red line for our country.⁴²

⁴¹ Lucas (2005), op.cit, pp. 134 – 135.

⁴² http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1507648.stm [last visited 24 August 2001].

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During this period King Abdullah urged the necessity to refer to the Jordanian *watani* identity and use it as a prop to mitigate the overriding effects of the *Arabist* and Palestinian dimensions in the form of anti-Israeli public outcry. One step forward in re-constructing the Jordanian identity was brought by the 'Jordan First, Arab Second Campaign (*al-Urdun Awalan*)' launched in October 2002. Given that internal debates in the country were totally centered on identity conflict in the aftermath of the Al-Aqsa *intifada*, King Abdullah's priority was to focus the attention of the Jordanian people on pure domestic issues rather than setting the domestic agenda on either the Palestinian identity, Palestinian refugees or the Occupied Lands. The fundamental objective of *al-Urdun Awalan* was, thus, to re-construct the very definition and limits of Jordanian identity by consolidating its *watani* component. In other words, the Campaign offered a state-led project to strengthen the national unity and preferences in the East Bank territories. In this sense, the Jordan First motto is in parallel with the 'East Bank First' trend of Transjordanian nationalists that was adopted in the aftermath of the civil war in the 1970s. However the Jordan First idea is partially associated with the East Bank First trend given the severing of ties with the West Bank territories in 1988.

By September 2002, the Jordanian flag was posted on billboards all around the country with a slogan attached to it, 'Jordan First, Arab Second.' The campaign can be summarized as:

"A working plan that seeks to deepen the sense of national identity among citizens where everyone acts as partners the Kingdom... Jordan is for all Jordanians and we appreciate the role of the opposition when it is for the interest of Jordan and its political development and when it works to improve citizens' standards of living and developing Jordan".

Although the Campaign offered a nationalist approach, it has however become the main strategy of the Kingdom to cope with the resurgence of the Palestinian uprising. The Minister of Planning, Bassam Awadallah, stated "the new national motto is meant to encourage candidates and voters to concentrate on ... domestic change, rather than focusing the whole debate

and spending all energies on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Iraq crisis.”⁴³

The Jordan First campaign is thus aimed to make Jordanian identity more *Jordanized*, less *Palestinized* and less *Arabized*. In this regard, Curtis Ryan suggests that some causes of the domestic opposition, including the secular left and the religious right, have become to be perceived as *un-Jordanian* from the point of the ruling elite.⁴⁴ In view of this policy, the regime has sought not to foster nationalism, but to contain the growing opposition of Palestinian descents and East Bankers via disassociating internal political agenda from the supra-national Arabist and Islamist discourses. The detachment of Islamist supra-state preferences has become an integral part of regime’s agenda specifically after the ‘US war on terror’ strategy in the post 9/11 period.

At this point, as Ryan indicates, King Abdullah’s Jordan First Campaign can be regarded more as a ‘Security First’ approach instead of Jordan First to counterbalance the dissemination of supra-state and supra-national preferences into the domestic program of the Jordanian people. Looked from this framework, the pillars in the campaign’s official document clearly demonstrate how far the Jordan First initiative is a national reconstruction project. One of the pillars in the campaign asserts the social and political integration of *all* Jordanians irrespective of their ethnic or religious background. Under Jordan First, the regime re-assured the citizens of Palestinian descents of their rights. Given that all Jordanian citizens have the same rights under the Constitution, the campaign implicitly pays attention to displaced West Bank Palestinians living on the East Bank land to choose either to be full Jordanian citizens or to assume the Palestinian national identity. This pillar of the campaign clearly reinforces Jordan’s new policy of ‘single citizenship.’

One critical response of the regime was in the realm of the activities of the political parties and civil society organizations. The campaign attempted to limit the interaction of the political parties with external groups with the main target behind this objective being those ideas carrying supra-state Pan-Arabist and Islamist identities. In pursuing this objective, the

⁴³ www.mfa.go.jo. [last visited 15 September 2004]

⁴⁴ *The Jordan Times*, (19 December 2002).

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Political Parties Law needs to be reformulated through some legal measures. One legal measure taken during this period was banning the establishment of political parties on the basis of region, race, and religion. In addition, the regime has urged the necessity to re-formulate the registered political parties into three main groups. In this regard, all the 31 registered parties in the country will be divided into right, center and left.⁴⁵ Strengthening the political parties into three major ideological blocs will provide the regime with the necessary tools to supervise and restrain the activities of other professional organizations and grassroots movements. Reforming political parties is closely intertwined with the political forces organized under the Anti-Normalization Campaign (ANC) revealed after the peace with the Israeli state as well.

The Jordan First initiative subsequently worked out a National Committee to pursue and institutionalize the objectives of the Jordan First idea. The National Agenda devised by the committee categorized the reforms into three main areas: political, administrative and social. Among other objectives, the Agenda will firstly address the amendment of the Political Parties Law. Although the 1992 Political Parties Law is still in force, Prime Minister Ali Abu Ragheb introduced a draft proposal to amend the existing law in December 2002.⁴⁶ Although the IAF took the leadership in invoking debates over the reformation of the electoral law, it has not been set on the agenda of the National Committee even today.

With the 'Jordan First' strategy, King Abdullah had the perception that the internal unrest could be gradually mitigated by the policy of demographic and territorial detachment from Palestine. However it is highly questionable as to what extent the Jordan First initiative, with the inauguration of the National Agenda, will be instrumental in encompassing the entire nation.⁴⁷ For Adnan Abu Odeh, theoretically speaking, the Jordan First initiative could bring unity in the Jordanian nation, but practically it cannot encompass the whole people in society. For him, "to achieve that

⁴⁵ Curtis Ryan, "Jordan First: Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations...", op.cit, p. 13.

⁴⁶ Fares Braizat, "Jordan: Why Political Reform Does Not Progress", *Arab Reform Bulletin*, Vol. 4, Issue. 6, (July 2006). The draft Political Parties Law considering the classification of parties into three blocs is still pending to be ratified by the legislature since then.

⁴⁷ "King directs government to implement Jordan First Recommendation as soon as possible", *The Jordan Times*, 19 December 2002.

objective [the national unity] it needs trust and confidence by the people. This [does] not exist[ed].”⁴⁸ Accordingly, a Jordanian national once said “We don’t believe that Jordan First campaign will favor all Jordanians. It will only benefit those people close to the throne.”⁴⁹ Many Jordanians think that it is deceptive and unreliable to be disassociated from the regional crises, particularly from the Palestinian issue. Many people think that all the nationals in this country are Jordanian irrespective of their religion and ethnic origin.

According to Toujan Faisal, if it is necessary to devise a new identity for Jordan, it should be *Urdustini* (a hybrid of *Urduni-Filastini* identities) under a democratic Arab state given the fact that the majority of Jordanians feel themselves both Jordanian and Palestinian. For instance, Faisal indicated that she was representing “all segments of Jordanian people including Palestinians, Circassians and Jordanians. It’s the regime trying to separate to rule.”⁵⁰ Faisal, as a former member of the Parliament, also states “if you are not in the government, automatically the regime considers you [to be] opposition here.” In this sense, the national re-construction of Jordanian identity and norms under the Kingdom’s Jordan First Campaign entails the limitations on an *ideal* citizen, voter and candidate from the point of view of the Hashemite monarchy rather than aiming to encompass different ethnic, religious and social units countrywide.

Precisely, in the Maani incident in 2002, the growing public discontent with regime’s policies, not only among the Palestinian descents, but also among Transjordanians as well, resurfaced. Given that Maan has been the stronghold of the Hashemite monarchy since the establishment of the Emirate in 1923, this event of 2002 illustrated the fact that there is a growing Islamic armed activism in Jordan that includes the southern provinces.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Interview with Adnan Abu Odeh, former advisor to King Hussein and King Abdullah II and the member of International Crisis Group (ICG) centered at Brussels, 22 June 2006, Amman.

⁴⁹ Interview with an Amman resident, 17 June 2006, Amman.

⁵⁰ Interview with Toujan Faisal, former member of the Lower Chamber from the Circassian minority, 20 June 2006, Amman.

⁵¹ “Red Alert in Jordan: Recurrent Unrest in Maan”, *International Crisis Group (ICG)*, Middle East Briefing, 19 February 2003.

The Future of Jordan's Democratic Opening in the light of Palestinian Identity and the War in Iraq

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan offers a significant example regarding democratic opening in the Arab world as a whole. Jordan has been considered as one of the most democratized states in the area due to its political liberalization efforts that have been underway since 1989. In fact, the 1989 parliamentary elections cannot be considered as the first free elections held in Jordan's history, given the period prior to the imposition of the martial law in 1957. However, the Kingdom did not hold elections from 1967 until 1989, fearing the threat brought by the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank territories. The democratic expansion brought by the late 1980s was partially related with the political, and for the most part connected to economic, crises. This article, in this respect, basically argues that the case of democratization in Jordanian politics is not only a *political co-optation* policy to cope with the negative effects of economic recession in the country, but also predominately accompanied by the change in the meaning and scope of *defining Jordanian national identity vis-à-vis* the Palestinian majority.

The major dynamic behind the political opening was the new West Bank strategy and re-construction of identity politics in the Kingdom. Here the significant turning point was the severing of ties with the Palestinian territories in 1988. Since the representation of the West Bank Palestinian-Jordanians was formally terminated by the disengagement from the West Bank and Palestine in 1988, the regime opted to change the allocation of seats in the Parliament. In this respect, the 1989 elections even now represent a watershed in the country's political history, representing the political detachment of Jordan from that of Palestine. The first symptom of this policy of King Hussein was the change in the election law. Although King Hussein's decision to disengage from Palestine territories did not mean *disengagement* from the Palestinian-Jordanians (they all were still regarded as Jordanian citizens), but the election law that was amended in 1989 has become, for the most part, a policy of removing the political representation of Jordanians of Palestinian origin in the legislature.

The Jordan First motto and launching of the National Agenda suggests a case in Jordan where the monarchical rule sets the rules of the democratic opening first and creates a safe atmosphere for the pro-regime loyalists to

win the elections at the end. As Ellen Lust-Okar states “electoral politics under authoritarianism are both systematic and shaped by institutions, even if they are fundamentally different from electoral politics in democratic regimes.”⁵² For instance, only 7.34% of the Jordanian population in 2004 thought that the Parliament actively took part in the legislative process.⁵³ Given the parliamentary elections of 2007, the Parliament endorsed a new law re-considering the 1992 Political Parties Law.⁵⁴ The new law stipulates that for a political party to be legal, the required number of founding members was 500, whereas previously only 50 were required. In addition, the law established a 10% minimum representation from at least five provinces for each political party.⁵⁵ The Opposition Parties Higher Coordination Committee responded quickly to the new law saying it is “restrictive and unconstitutional.”⁵⁶ In this context, the fundamental objective of the government was to restrict the establishment of divergent political groups and signal a revision of the political party law in accordance with Abu Ragheb’s initiative of reformulating the parties into three major blocs – right, left and center.

The war in Iraq that started in 2003 has, consequently, demonstrated a new phase in Jordan’s retreat from democratization efforts. As the former director of the Center for Strategic Studies (CSS) located at the University of Jordan, Mustafa Hamarneh, stated that “Jordan would suffer almost as much as Iraq if there is a war. We could face massive social unrest.”⁵⁷ With the September 11 attacks and the war in Iraq, the Hashemite monarchy has felt the necessity to detain the growing domestic unrest posed by the influx of Iraqis into Jordan from the eastern border. Although its birthplace was the Palestinian-populated city of Zarqa, the rise of *Salafism* has become a new phenomenon challenging the Kingdom’s democratization efforts when the

⁵² Ellen Lust-Okar, “Elections under Authoritarianism: Preliminary Lessons from Jordan”, *Democratization*, Vol. 13, No. 3, (June 2006), p. 458.

⁵³ “Political parties raising voices against the new law”, *The Jordan Times*, 13-14 July 2007.

⁵⁴ Jordan: Elections without Surprises”, *Arab Reform Bulletin*, Vol. 5, Issue. 8, (October 2007).

⁵⁵ “Revival of the National Agenda”, *The Jordan Times*, 1 October 2007.

⁵⁶ “Recent Developments in Arab Political Parties Law”, *Arab Reform Bulletin*, May 19, 2007. at <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/>

⁵⁷ “Why Jordan is Terrified of a US Attack on Iraq”, *Business Week*, September 23, 2002.

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riots and internal unrest in Maan are taken into consideration.⁵⁸ As compared to Maan, Zarqa is the second largest city, after Amman, in Jordan where the Palestinian descents are settled. It was claimed that more than 300 people from Zarqa went to Chechnya, Afghanistan and Iraq to fight in 2004, among them 63 were imprisoned either in Jordan or in Guantanamo.⁵⁹ Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi – a Jordanian-Jordanian from Zarqa – founded his base in the western city of Heart in Afghanistan where he recruited exiled Palestinians, Syrians and Jordanians in Europe, without having any formal links to al-Qaeda.⁶⁰ In the aftermath of the September 11 episode, Zarqawi moved to northern Iraq and established a training camp linked to *Ansar al-Islam*. The assassination of Ali Bourjaq, a Jordanian police official, in February 2002 was said to relate to Zarqawi's group. Simultaneously, the name of Zarqawi was also included in the assassination of USAID official Lawrence Foley in Jordan. These perceptions of threat to Jordan's regime survival and security urged the monarchy to bring identity politics back onto Jordan's agenda. In line with this policy, in the post-2000 era hundreds of Islamists were arrested on the suspicion that they had links with al-Qaeda and also 1,700 of them were detained in the post – 9/11 era in Jordan.⁶¹

Subsequently, the triple suicide bombings in Amman on 9 November 2005 were detrimental to re-shaping the politics of identity and democratization in the Kingdom. It was allegedly claimed that it was

⁵⁸ *Salafism* in Jordan: Historically speaking Salafism dates back to the 19th century when a group of people developed a reform oriented movement in Egypt. Salafi means follower of ancestors in Arabic. The mentor of Salafi movement was Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani. Salafism believed that Koran and the hadith (Prophet Muhammed's sayings and practices) are two legitimate sources of religious authority. Salafism has become active in Jordanian context by Nasir al-Din Albani who moved to Jordan by 1970s from Syria. Albani founded his base in Zarqa where he inspired many followers to correct Islam. The traditionalists embraced Albani's thought; those who reject violence formed the Reformists in 1995; and Jihadi Salafists emerged by 1992 with their mentor Maqdisi to abolish unbeliever (*kuffar*) regimes through violent means, notably the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, C. Hurst and Co Ltd, 2004, p. 305 and "Jordan's 9/11", *International Crisis Group Report*, No. 47, 23 November 2005.

⁵⁹ Hazem al-Amin, "Jordan's Zarqawists" and "Zarqawi's al-Qaeda Connection", *Terrorism Monitor*, Volume. 2, No. 24 (16 December 2004), p. 7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ "Jordan's 9/11: Dealing With Jihadi Islamism", *International Crisis Group Report*, No. 47, (23 November 2005), p. 12.

Zarqawi who organized suicide bombings.⁶² The Amman bombings created tension between Iraqi residents and Jordanians in the country. There are 400 thousand Iraqis living in Jordan who think that Jordan has become their second homeland.⁶³ Given that wealthy Iraqi families moved to Amman after the war began, Jordanians have begun to think that the rise in prices (real estate in particular), cost of living and increase in unemployment are all rooted in the new migration from Iraq. In addition, Zarqawi's connection with the resistance groups led the Iraqis to fear attacks to their properties or jobs. In Jordan, both Jordanians and Palestinian descents have mostly shared the belief that "Iraqis are buying Amman."⁶⁴

The enlargement of the Jordan First motto expressing the idea 'we are all Jordan and Jordanian' denotes a clear reference to the ongoing tension across country's western borders. More precisely, it has been once again critical for the Hashemite regime to re-emphasize the ideas and symbols inherent in the Jordan First Campaign. The assessment of Toujan Faisal regarding the bombings in Amman illustrates the role of regional and systemic constraints and forces on Jordan's domestic policy-making. Faisal said that, "Everybody condemned the bombings, but I condemned the *causes* of the bombings."⁶⁵ Moreover, the fear of dismemberment of Iraq initially led King Abdullah to think that "Iraq is a battleground, [between] the West against Iran" since there are Shiites in Iraq who have concerns about Iran.⁶⁶ Thus, Jordan's policy during the Iraqi war was then perceived as the main source of the bombings by the Kingdom itself as well.

The war in Iraq made it clear for the monarchy that Jordan is too fragile to cope with deeply growing economic problems and internal unrest.⁶⁷ The tensions between the IAF and the throne became highly apparent when the government attempted to expand its monitoring over the

⁶² *Economist Intelligence Units*, "Jordan Politics: Caught in the Middle, as usual", 11 November 2005.

⁶³ "Ürdün-İrak İlişkileri Sınavdan Geçiyor", *Dünya Gündemi Gazetesi*, 20 – 27 Kasım 2005.

⁶⁴ Ingrid McDonald, "The War Next Door?", *American Scholar*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (Spring 2006).

⁶⁵ Interview with Toujan Faisal, 20 June 2006, Amman.

⁶⁶ "Middle East Quarterly Interview with King Abdullah II", *Middle Eastern Quarterly*, (Spring 2005), pp. 73 – 80.

⁶⁷ Ibrahim Gharaibeh, "Implications of the Jordanian Parliament's Dissolution", *Arab Reform Bulletin*, (13 January 2010).

imams in the mosques. In September 2006, the Lower Chamber ratified the *iftaa* law (Islamic verdicts). The *iftaa* law makes written approval from the minister of religious affairs necessary for new imams.⁶⁸ The IAF members all tried to block the legislation on the ground that it highly limits people's religious freedoms and beliefs.

The National Agenda is, at the moment, under reformation by the Jordanian elites with the aim of arranging the social, political and economic aspects of the country for the next ten years. The National Agenda, above all, attempts to address the reformulation of the electoral law on the basis of 'one person – two votes', one for local representative and the other for a candidate nationwide. However the consensus over the draft law is not achieved yet. In addition, the Agenda brings two significant issues into discussion: the abolishment of the Higher Media Council and making the membership in the Jordanian Press Association optional.

Conclusion

Jordan has, lately, been caught between the necessities of the state and the preferences of its society in the aftermath of the Al-Aqsa *intifada*. The multinational invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the Israeli decision to disengage from Gaza represent two major bases on which the Kingdom has recently been urged to re-formulate its politics of identity. The re-surfacing of discourses on the 'Jordanian-Palestinian Re-engagement' and/ or 'a confederal solution' for the Palestinian-Israeli dispute⁶⁹ and the enduring 'identity conflict' that has grown out between the regime and the public by an external challenge – the second Palestinian *intifada* – exemplify why the Kingdom is in need of a new *watani* (territorial) identity. The regime has urged the reformulation of the limits and the scope of Jordanian ideals and norms to cope with the external instabilities across the River Jordan. Disassociating Jordanian politics from that of Palestinian will be the main safety valve in alleviating internal unrest in the forms of supra-state and

⁶⁸ "Jordan: King pardons MPs; Parliament approves the Laws", *Arab Reform Bulletin*, Vol. 4, No. 8 (October 2006).

⁶⁹ "A Palestinian-Jordanian Confederation of some variety seems to be the most natural political alternative from historical, cultural and ethnic standpoints... Thus the possibility of a renewed Palestinian-Jordanian Re-engagement may complement the historic process of ending Israel's presence in major Palestinian population centers in the West Bank...". Diker & Inbari (2005), op.cit, p. 11.

parochial affiliations. Therefore the regime has sought to de-liberalize the political landscape by re-defining the demarcations of pure Jordanian citizen under the Jordan First Campaign and 'We Are All Jordan Commission' in the post-*intifada* period. On the one hand, the durability and longevity of the monarchy is highly dependent on democratic reforms, on the other regime's policy of 'Putting Jordan *First* and Arabs *Second*' necessitates a de-liberalization strategy.

Given that the election law has not been revised yet, the IAF does not expect to acquire more than 20% of the seats in the legislature in the upcoming elections.⁷⁰ A poll conducted by the University of Jordan's Center for Strategic Studies demonstrated recently that there exists a "declining confidence in the government."⁷¹ The survey also suggests that the persisting 'confidence gap' between the Jordanian nation and the government is prone to increase due to unemployment, poverty and the poor living conditions of the Jordanians.⁷² It is therefore highly questionable as to what extent the Jordan First Campaign was a *reward* to encourage resolution of Jordan's internal and external instabilities.

One significant point in the forthcoming elections in 2011 will be the role of the Islamist candidates. Given that Islamist organizations are the only open door for Palestinians and discontent Jordanians to express their feelings, the *Salafi* and *Jihadi* Islamism incrementally strengthens its significance and space countrywide. Although the forthcoming elections will likely be held under the prevailing electoral law, which retains the one person-one vote principle and the underrepresentation of the Palestinian community in the national Parliament, the IAF will be the main political party both fighting against corruption and poverty while also struggling to amend the electoral system.⁷³ In addition, the policy of non-discrimination of *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn* and later its political wing, the Islamic Action Front (IAF), has promoted Palestinian membership in Islamist movements in the country. In this regard, the Kingdom of Jordan illustrates a significant case in the Arab Middle East where Islamist groups play a crucial position in

⁷⁰ "IAF to participate in parliamentary polls", *The Jordan Times*, 27 September 2007.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² "Public confidence in government declining – Poll", *The Jordan Times*, 11 June 2007.

⁷⁴ Fares Braizat, "Why Political Reform Does Not Progress", *Arab Reform Bulletin*, (18 August 2008).

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resisting political repression and advocating social and political reformation to encompass the society entirely (Jordanian, Palestinian, Arab and Islamist) rather than excluding others. In spite of this, the ongoing regional predicaments across its borders, prevailing conflict in Iraq and unsettlement of Palestinian problem, have driven the Kingdom to slow down the speed of political liberalization since the Amman bombings of 2006.⁷⁴

The results of the 2007 parliamentary elections have primarily depicted the very fact that the 'Jordan First' campaign has reverberated and turned into a 'Security First' strategy in the eyes of the Jordanians themselves. One significant outcome of the 2007 elections was, then, the substantial decrease in support for the IAF⁷⁵ and the predominance of pro-monarchical deputies in the Parliament which exhibits to what extent the campaign is, for the moment, deprived of effective nationwide support.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ The IAF today has seven delegates in the Lower Chamber as compared to 17 in the post-2003 parliamentary elections.